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POETRY & LIFE

CHATTERTON & HIS POETRY

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House in which Chatterton died

CHATTERTON & HIS POETRY

BY

JOHN H. INGRAM

Author of "The True Chatterton"
"Marlowe and His Poetry" etc.



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GENERAL PREFACE

A GLANCE through the pages of this little book will suffice to disclose the general plan of the series of which it forms a part. Only a few words of explanation, therefore, will be necessary.

The point of departure is the undeniable fact that with the vast majority of young students of literature a living interest in the work of any poet can best be aroused, and an intelligent appreciation of it secured, when it is immediately associated with the character and career of the poet himself. The cases are indeed few and far between in which much fresh light will not be thrown upon a poem by some knowledge of the personality of the writer, while it will often be found that the most direct—perhaps even the only—way to the heart of its meaning lies through a consideration of the circumstances in which it had its birth. The purely æsthetic critic may possibly object that a poem should be regarded simply as a self-contained and detached piece of art, having no personal affiliations or bearings. Of the validity of this as an abstract principle nothing need now be said. The fact remains that, in the earlier stages of study at any rate, poetry is most valued and loved when it is made to seem most human and vital ; and the human and vital interest of poetry can be most surely brought home to the reader by the biographical method of interpretation.

GENERAL PREFACE

This is to some extent recognised by writers of histories and text-books of literature, and by editors of selections from the works of our poets ; for place is always given by them to a certain amount of biographical material. But in the histories and text-books the biography of a given writer stands by itself, and his work has to be sought elsewhere, the student being left to make the connexion for himself ; while even in our current editions of selections there is little systematic attempt to link biography, step by step, with production.

This brings us at once to the chief purpose of the present series. In this, biography and production will be considered together and in intimate association. In other words, an endeavour will be made to interest the reader in the lives and personalities of the poets dealt with, and at the same time to use biography as an introduction and key to their writings.

Each volume will therefore contain the life-story of the poet who forms its subject. In this, attention will be specially directed to his personality as it expressed itself in his poetry, and to the influences and conditions which counted most as formative factors in the growth of his genius. This biographical study will be used as a setting for a selection, as large as space will permit, of his representative poems. Such poems, where possible, will be reproduced in full, and care will be taken to bring out their connexion with his character, his circumstances, and the movement of his mind. Then, in

GENERAL PREFACE

addition, so much more general literary criticism will be incorporated as may seem to be needed to supplement the biographical material, and to exhibit both the essential qualities and the historical importance of his work.

It is believed that the plan thus pursued is substantially in the nature of a new departure, and that the volumes of this series, constituting as they will an introduction to the study of some of our greatest poets, will be found useful to teachers and students of literature, and no less to the general lover of English poetry.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON

PREFATORY NOTE

IN 1780 Sir Herbert Croft published a volume entitled "Love and Madness," which included several original letters by and much interesting information about Chatterton. The first Life of Chatterton, by Dr G. Gregory, was issued in 1789, and furnished some fresh items of biographical matter. It was reprinted in 1803, as introductory to the three-volume collection of Chatterton's Works, edited by Southey and Cottle. A copy of this Life, annotated by C. V. Le Grice, is possessed by me, and is valuable as affording the first evidence that Chatterton originally wrote his Rowley pieces in contemporary English, and then, by the aid of archaic words from Bailey's and Kersey's dictionaries, gave them the pseudo-antique garb they now wear.

Thomas Warton, Joseph Cottle, George Price, and others supplied items of biographical fact additional to those already known. In 1837 "John Dix" included fresh poems and material in a new Memoir that he published, but the authenticity of his work was distrusted when the Appendix was found to be full of fictitious material. The reproduction of this false matter has damaged the utility of all subsequent biographies of Chatterton, including even Sir Daniel Wilson's interesting work of 1869, and Edward Bell's carefully written memoir of 1871, in the Aldine series of British Poets. The present writer, in his work "The True Chatter-

PREFATORY NOTE

ton," issued in 1910, not only exposed the numerous inaccuracies due to Dix's misstatements, but by means of much original documentary evidence was enabled to throw light upon other obscured phases of Chatterton's career and construct an entirely new life of the young Bristol poet.

J. H. I.

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FOR considerably over a century the Chattertons had belonged to the lowly classes, most of them having been sextons of St Mary Redcliff Church, Bristol. The first member of this family known to have emerged from this humble position was a Thomas Chatterton, born in 1713, who had not only aspiration for a better situation, but sufficient ability to attain it. He was fortunate in obtaining an education at Colston's Hospital, a well-known Bristol school. Although the subjects taught there were of an elementary character, the tuition, as far as it went, appears to have been thorough and well fitted as a foundation for higher things. Eventually this senior Thomas Chatterton, according to his daughter's statement, spent seven years as an assistant master at an academy at Sodbury, Gloucestershire, and during that time managed to acquire a knowledge of Latin and otherwise qualified himself for tutorial work. In 1739 he was appointed master of Pile Street Free School, Bristol, an appointment he retained until his death in 1752. During this mastership he married Sarah Young, a girl of about half his age, yet notwithstanding this disparity there is no trustworthy evidence that the marriage was not a happy one.

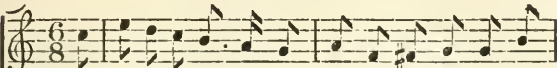
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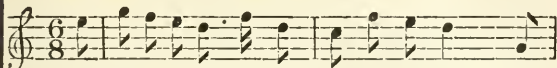
The schoolmaster obtained a post in Bristol Cathedral, which enabled him to add a few guineas to his slender income by copying out music for the use of the chaunters, of whom he was one himself. He was also a composer in a small way, and one of his compositions, a catch for three voices, has been preserved, together with the words. Although the piece scarcely justifies the character given this Chatterton by a contemporary of being a "complete master of the theory and practice of music," it may be regarded as evidence of his musical ability, whilst the words, if of little value, may be accepted as a slight proof of the poetical powers ascribed to him, and are, therefore, interesting. "The Pine Apple" referred to was a tavern where a club of which Chatterton was a member was held.

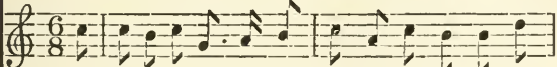
The schoolmaster was regarded as a great reader; he had read Cornelius Agrippa, and was credited with a belief in magic. He was a collector of ancient coins and displayed some numismatic knowledge. Altogether he was a man of no little ability for his class and the times. There were other traits in his character which marked him out still more strongly from the people among whom he dwelt. His eccentricities included great reticence, absent-mindedness in company, and solitary walks by the river, when he was said to gesticulate and mutter to himself, whilst above all, "like all his family, he was so proud." The point of those records is to show that the peculiarities of the father

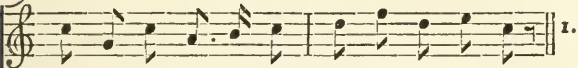
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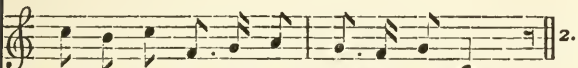
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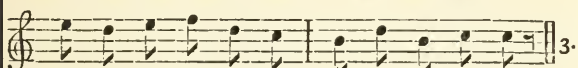
1.  Since now we are met and re - solved to be jol - ly, And

2.  Then pass it a - bout, my brave Boys, nev - er fear ; There's

3.  While Zea - lots and Fools with their Fac - tions do grap - ple, They

 1. drink our good Li - quor to drown Me - lan - cho - ly,

 2. Meat, Drink, and Clothes in good Ale and strong Beer.

 3. taste not those Joys that are at the "Pine - ap - ple."

were inherited by his posthumous son, the poet.

A little more than three months after the death of the senior Chatterton, on November 20, 1752, a son was born to the widow, and on January 1, 1753, was christened Thomas in the beautiful St Mary Redcliff, the church which in after years he added so much to the glory of by his writings.

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For about five years after her husband's death the widow was permitted to live in the Free School, the new master being unmarried, but when he in turn was succeeded by a Mr Love, a family man, the house was required, and she had to leave. Poor Mrs Chatterton had not only two children to support, but also for several years her deceased husband's mother. In order to maintain this household she started a school for children, and took in fancy needlework. She is recorded to have drawn patterns in indigo on muslin for ladies to work to, and was noted for the skill with which her designs were executed ; a fact which shows that she was artistically inclined as well as industrious. Her son's biographers have described her as having " no shining abilities," but it is proved that her educational capabilities were by no means poor for the age in which she lived. She was good-hearted, loved by her kindred, and respected by those who had dealings with her. Her pupils called her " kind and motherly," a niece referred to her as " one of the best of women," whilst her son, notwithstanding all his singularities, evidently adored her.

Thomas Chatterton, despite his indigent surroundings and sensitive nature, had not an unhappy childhood. His mother was always poor, and struggled hard to maintain her little household respectably, but she bore her trials bravely, and gave her children a comfortable home. Humble as was the boy's position in life, he was endowed with his father's pride

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and ambition, and by means of his mother's exertions was able to appear before the world in a better manner than most children in the same class of life. Little trustworthy can be learnt of a child's early years, although the influence of its surroundings have so much to do with the formation of its character.

The premature loss of his father may have delayed or have altered the growth of Chatterton's mental powers ; at any rate, his sister testified that he "was dull at learning, not knowing many letters at four years old, and always objected to read in a small book." At five he was placed at the Free School where his father had taught, but the presiding master could not discern any ability in the boy and sent him back to his mother as a confirmed dullard. Whatever latent capacity Chatterton then had, his master's system failed to discover it, but his mother's maternal instinct detected a method of drawing out her child's powers : she took him in hand and taught him the alphabet from the illuminated capitals of an old music book "he had fallen in love with."

As soon as the child had learned to read he gave himself up to study with such eagerness that his mother feared his health would be injured : from the first thing in the morning until the last thing at night he was to be seen with a book in his hand. Neither health nor reason suffered from his sedentary habits, and by his eighth year he was ready and anxious to go to the school provided for him. His

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mother had succeeded in obtaining for him admittance to Colston's Free School, the place where his father had gained the rudiments of his education. Much ink has been wasted in depreciating the value of Colston's schooling in those days, yet it must be contended that Chatterton's tuition in that institution was the most valuable asset of his short existence. He was admitted on the Free School foundation on August 3, 1760, about three months prior to the completion of his eighth year.

Thus far Chatterton's precocious childhood had been devoted to reading, diversified by unrestricted rambles in the precincts of St Mary Redcliff Church, a place he had been connected with all his young life, by ancestral ties and his earliest associations. His thoughts by day and his dreams by night were undoubtedly influenced by the beauties and marvels of the old edifice, so that by degrees his mind became devoted to the creation of an imaginative history of its production.

Chatterton had been anticipating his entrance to school life as a means of affording him endless reading and study. Its commencement was a bitter disappointment, for both body and mind were now deprived of the liberty they had hitherto enjoyed. Colston's rules were rigid and had to be strictly adhered to. The hours of study in summer were from 7 a.m. till noon, and from 1 p.m. till 5 p.m., and in winter from 8 a.m. till noon, and from 1 till 4 p.m. The discipline was severe. All through the year the

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boys, irrespective of age, had to be in bed by 8 p.m., and the only leaves granted were on Saturdays and Saints days, when the pupils were free from one or two in the afternoon till seven or eight in the evening, according to the season. No other holidays were allowed. Sunday was spent at the school, in religious exercises, public or private. In accordance with the rules of the Founder, the boys were to be instructed in the religious principles inculcated by the Church of England Catechism, whilst their secular education was confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic. Colston had secured a suitable old building as a home for one hundred boys, and had arranged for their boarding, clothing, and education therein. The boys were clothed in the Tudor costume, similar to that worn by the pupils at the London Blue Coat School, consisting of dark blue gown, yellow stockings, and leather belt. The Bristol boys wore a metal medal on their breasts, bearing the Founder's crest, a dolphin, and had their hair cut in imitation of a monk's tonsure. Colston had not deemed it necessary to go beyond the limited education he had ordained for the rank of boys selected, and evidently considered it impossible, or at any rate undesirable, for them to aspire to a higher class of study, yet, under the guidance of liberal-minded masters, in some instances at least, a higher training appears to have been afforded, judging by the results frequently obtained. On leaving school at the expiration of his term each boy was apprenticed or placed in a respectable

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occupation, the premium being paid out of money left by Colston for that purpose.

For the ordinary boy of those days of the rank Chatterton belonged to, Colston's was a suitable institution, but for a lad with ambition or capacity for higher things its system was inadequate. Upon taking up his abode at "The Great House," as it was styled, Chatterton was much aggrieved. He was discontented with the limited nature of the instruction provided, and felt greatly the restraint upon his personal liberty. However, he was not a shirker, nor one to neglect opportunities. He was always ready to avail himself of all chances of success, and as soon as the first feeling of disappointment wore off he applied himself to study so well that the assistant master informed Mrs Chatterton that her son had made rapid progress in arithmetic, and could always be relied on for his veracity. Moreover, Mr Haynes, the headmaster, who seems to have had the happy knack of discovering meritorious pupils, became his friend and acquired a strong liking for him.

It was a great treat for Chatterton when a half-holiday enabled him to spend some time with the dear ones at home, when he would discuss matters with a precocity somewhat difficult for the household to cope with ; as he said of his hero, his ideal Canynge,¹ he was

As wise as any of the aldermen,
He'd wit enough to make a mayor at ten.

¹ The family name of this man was Canynges, but Chatterton always spelt it without the s.

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Although he formed friendships with several of his schoolfellows and seemed popular with some of them, they must have regarded him as something out of the common when they told his mother that he passed his playtime in reading. Such reading as it was, too, for a boy of his years! Chiefly works on divinity and history. It was not so unnatural, however, for a boy of his impressive and precocious mind to resort to works of divinity, seeing how the precepts and doctrines of the authors he selected were dealt with and advocated by the regulations of Colston. When he was ten he was confirmed by the bishop of the diocese, and attracted notice by the seriousness of his answers and the appropriate remarks he made upon the occasion.

About this time a most noteworthy event occurred in his career. He composed what are believed to be his first verses, and, what was more remarkable for his age, he got them inserted in "Felix Farley's Journal," a Bristol paper, on January 8, 1763. As is natural, these childish lines on the "Day of Judgment," and the other religious pieces he wrote about the same time, possess little poetic value. They are merely paraphrases of theological items he had to con daily, but they are correctly written, and display a knowledge of the art of versification. A very suggestive remark was made by his sister in regard to these attempts. She said: "He had been gloomy from the time he began to learn, and we remarked he was more cheerful

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after he began to write poetry.' He had discovered his vocation and felt a natural gratification at it. A most interesting question in the boy's career is what impelled him to resort to versification, and the answer is discoverable.

Thomas Phillips, formerly a pupil and now assistant master of the school, had taken to writing poems, which were published in contemporary journals. Inspired by his example, several of Chatterton's schoolfellows also tried their hands at verse, and some of them were even successful enough to get their efforts into print. The admiration excited by Phillips' work among the scholars, and their attempts to emulate him, may reasonably be regarded as the cause of Chatterton's first recourse to verse. It is, however, significant of the lad's character that he never acquainted any of his comrades with his efforts. He let them proudly display their productions, and even attain notoriety by their publication, but he maintained the profoundest secrecy about his own doings.

When once Chatterton started versifying he appears to have kept at it at all spare moments. At first he adopted scriptural themes, but as his powers matured and his mind enlarged he resorted to satire. A specimen of the first, "A Hymn for Christmas Day," was given a place in "Felix Farley's Journal." Although it displays no originality of treatment it is remarkable for correctness of language for so youthful an author. As a sample of his first known efforts these stanzas may be quoted :

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Almighty Framer of the skies !
O let our pure devotion rise,
 Like incense in Thy sight !
Wrapt in impenetrable shade,
The texture of our souls was made,
 Till Thy command gave light.

How shall we celebrate the day
When God appeared in mortal clay,
 The mark of worldly scorn ;
When the archangel's heavenly lays
Attempted the Redeemer's praise,
 And hailed Salvation's morn !

How shall we celebrate His name,
Who groaned beneath a life of shame,
 In all afflictions tried !
The soul is raptured to conceive
A truth, which Being must believe,
 The God Eternal died.

The whole poem was written in a little book such as he frequently used during his life, and in the same little book he soon after wrote down his first apparent attempt in a sarcastic vein. Unlike the "Hymn" which doubtless was little more than a paraphrase of his devotional reading, "Sly Dick," with all its shortcomings, has some show of original thought, and, seeing the improbability of this eleven-year-old child having had any aid from others, it is, to say the least, remarkable.

Sly Dick, in arts of cunning skilled,
Whose rapine all his pockets filled,
Had laid him down to take his rest
And soothe with sleep his anxious breast.

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'Twas thus a dark infernal sprite,
A native of the blackest night,
Portending mischief to devise,
Upon Sly Dick he cast his eyes.

Thus spake the sprite : " Hearken, my friend,
And to my counsels now attend.
Within the garret's spacious dome
There lies a well-stored wealthy room,
Well stored with cloth and stockings too,
Which I suppose will do for you;
First from the cloth take thou a purse,
For thee it will not be the worse;
A noble purse rewards thy pains,
A purse to hold thy filching gains;
Then, for the stockings, let them reeve,
And not a scrap behind thee leave ;
Five bundles for a penny sell,
And pence to thee will come pell-mell."

When in the morn, with thoughts erect,
Sly Dick did on his dream reflect,
" Why faith," thinks he, "'tis something too,
It might—perhaps—it might—be true.
I'll go and see." Away he hies,
And to the garret quick he flies,
Enters the room, cuts up the clothes,
And after that reeves up the hose;
Then of the cloth he purses made,
Purses to hold his filching trade.

A second satirical piece written and published whilst the boy was still about eleven displays greater command of language, but has no poetic value. It is characteristic, though, of the author's feelings in respect to any injury

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done to his revered edifice, St Mary Redcliff, his love and admiration for which increased with his years. The older he grew the more he longed to linger amid the architectural beauties of the old building, studying not only their glories, but the names and deeds of the persons commemorated on the tombs and tablets there. In this second piece he pilloried as "Joe" a certain Joseph Thomas, accused of having carted away the churchyard clay to make into bricks, and, worse still in the boy's eyes, of having removed the beautiful fifteenth-century cross from the grounds. Some months later the lad wrote a yet stronger invective against a certain "Apostate Will" for having changed his religious views in order to advance his income. The verses are precocious, but their author's training at Colston's had made him acquainted with the names and works of the theologians he refers to so familiarly.

It is a strong testimony to Chatterton's good character not only that he made and maintained a lasting friendship with lads who afterward acquired honourable positions in the world, but was likewise a favourite with the headmaster of the school—a most worthy man, who had commenced his career as a Colston scholar—and also continued on affectionate terms with the assistant master, Thomas Phillips, as long as the latter lived. Although Phillips was doubtless the immediate cause of Chatterton's resort to versifying, it is most probable that Mr Haynes, the headmaster, was

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the original inspirer of literary interests amongst the Colston students.

Those who have studied Chatterton's history will agree with Professor Wilson that the associates of the poet's younger days, much as some of them liked him, had no sense of his importance until after his death, when inquiries started by persons of worldly position made them anxious to display an intimate knowledge of the famous youth. As Wilson said rightly, "When learned antiquarians, deans, baronets and professors began to ply them with inquiries about their past intercourse with him, their self-importance was gratified and informants became minute and precise about facts and dates, which have since been too implicitly accepted as authentic." The chief of his schoolfellows who shared Chatterton's friendship was Thomas Cary, apparently his bed-mate at Colston's. Owing to the strict rules of the school the boys had to retire to rest at eight o'clock, and thus had to spend nearly half their time in bed. They could not sleep all the time, and must have had many hours for talk. Chatterton and Cary were much attached to each other, and having some kindred studies doubtless projected many things in common; but intimate as they were, and correspondents with one another as they were after they left school, the poet never entrusted even this friend with the great secret of his life, the authorship of the Rowley poems. Of course these poems were not written, even if conceived,

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until after Chatterton had left Colston's, and his intercourse with Cary then was probably slight. Cary ultimately attained a good position in the world. He resided chiefly in North America in the latter part of his life, and appears to have referred to his old schoolmate in affectionate terms.

An important fact connected with Chatterton's schooldays is that he had little difficulty in getting plenty of books to read. He was able to borrow them from, amongst others, a Mr Green, reputed to have had the largest collection of any bookseller in Bristol. He had to pay him a very small sum for the loan of books, and obtained from him Speght's edition of Chaucer, an author whose works he studied with more care than he has had credit for. Shakespeare, Milton, and other favourite poets he also studied closely, and imbued his thought with their beauties as well as their literary technicalities. It is a curious circumstance that, *as far as is known*, Chatterton did not write any verse during the latter years of his residence at Colston's. It is scarcely possible, however, that he attained the ease and finish his later versification displayed without having gone through much practice in the mechanical side of his art, and it would be a pleasant surprise if one could discover what portion of his literary labours was then produced. All trustworthy evidence goes to prove that he did not start upon the production of his Rowley pieces until after his schooldays were over.

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Chatterton left Colston's on July 1, 1767, after having lived there for seven years, probably the happiest years of his life, for there he had sympathetic instructors, friendly associates, and no dread of the morrow's necessities.

II

ON the very day the youth left school he was apprenticed to Mr John Lambert, scrivener, to whom the school authorities paid the sum of ten pounds as a premium out of the moneys Colston had bequeathed for such purposes. The indentures, now preserved in the Bristol Museum, stated, among other needful matters, that the boy's mother should provide for the apprentice's washing and mending during his term of service, and this part of the agreement is signed by Mrs Chatterton in good clear handwriting, resembling her late husband's. It is very probable that the widow had studied writing, as well as other arts, under the instruction of the deceased schoolmaster : certainly her calligraphy had a likeness to his.

The first recorded date in Chatterton's career after he had entered the scrivener's service is that of a rhymed letter of March 1768, addressed to his friend Baker. This epistle, as well as certain versified pieces it contained, is written in an experienced style, and is very different in art from the crude efforts of the schoolboy of 1767. The statement made by some of his companions, after his death, that he had shown

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them some of the Rowley manuscripts during his schooldays is incredible, and there is no proof that he exhibited any of his pseudo-antiques until he had been for some time in Lambert's office. Nor does it appear likely that any of the pieces he wrote for Baker to present to Miss Hoyland, or those to other girls of his acquaintance, were composed before that epoch of his life.

The situation in Lambert's office was not a bad one for a lad in Chatterton's position, as it offered possibilities for the future not often open to Free School boys in those days. He must have had a good character at Colston's to obtain such a post ; indeed, his conduct after he obtained it was perfectly correct, as Mr Lambert always acknowledged, although, for reasons to be explained, the scrivener " did not take to him." Lambert was only eight-and-twenty, comfortably off, and with little business to keep him at the office, so that Chatterton had not much legal work to do and plenty of time to do it in. The position enabled him to devote himself to writing verse, and to other congenial pursuits. He did not neglect his work, as several hundred folio pages of his handwriting exist to prove ; and Lambert, to be certain that the lad was in his place during office hours, occasionally sent his footman or other servants to see. They could but report that they found him in the office and hard at work, but the nature of his work would be beyond their comprehension ; they could not know whether he was busy with matters of law or of poetry.

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The lad had to have his meals and live at Lambert's house, which was at some distance from the office, where he had to be by eight in the morning daily. He had to be at the house for dinner and return to the office until eight in the evening, when he was free until ten. These two hours were nearly always spent at home. As his sister related, "We saw him most evenings before nine, and he would in general stay to the limits of his time. He was seldom two evenings together without seeing us." He had no holidays of any description beyond these daily two hours.

Chatterton was intensely proud, and may really have considered himself a descendant of the noble ancestry he invented for his family: the ideals of his imagination may have become real in the long course of mental acquaintance. What disgusted his proud spirit at Lambert's more than anything else was that he had to take his meals with the servants, who are not likely to have had any sympathy with him, whilst to add to his discomfort, he had to sleep with the footboy. This last indignity greatly worried him, as at this time, and, indeed, until the end of his life, he wished to spend the night in writing, believing that he could compose better then, especially toward the full of the moon.

How he arranged with the footboy on these occasions is unknown to history, but it is fairly well proved by the testimony of a later bed-fellow that he did carry out these nocturnal

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labours. That Lambert found his apprentice to have a "sullen and gloomy temper, which particularly displayed itself among the servants," is not to be wondered at, seeing how he was placed, and that he had no holidays and no salary. Lambert acknowledged that the lad was well behaved and of good character, and Chatterton owned that no apprentice had greater liberty than he had, and forbore satirizing his employer in his verse when nearly every other person he knew was stung by his pen.

Soon after Chatterton entered Lambert's office the business was removed to 37 Corn Street, opposite the Bristol Exchange. This was a pleasant change for the lad, as it brought him into contact with others of his own age, working in or near the same building. Some of them he became intimately acquainted with, and was able to receive them at his office, where they held social gatherings and discussed literary and other topics. This must have been pleasant for the poet, who liked to be everything to everybody, and as it gave him some excuse to exercise a kind of superiority over his companions. To some extent the impression he made upon them may be understood from the reminiscences they gave in later years, but only to some extent, as the reputation which grew up about the young poet's name after his death certainly influenced their stories. Rudhall, an apprentice to a neighbouring apothecary, was one of Chatterton's circle, but his account, which differs upon different occasions, as to the

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way in which the lad manufactured his Rowley poems may be ignored. Rudhall, according to his own story, broke off his acquaintance with Chatterton when they were both about sixteen, because his former friend sent him a challenge in return for some good advice he had given him about his "temporal and eternal happiness." Although of an impetuous and impulsive nature, Chatterton retained the friendship of most of his associates, who found him to have an attractive and affectionate disposition. He had an inexhaustible amount of energy, and had his character been permitted to develop naturally it might well have matured in a healthy and normal manner.

Of the several lads known to have been intimately acquainted with Chatterton during his apprenticeship three enjoyed his sincere friendship and spoke of him in after years with kindness and esteem. They were Thomas Cary, his schoolfellow at Colston's; Baker, who corresponded with him from South Carolina; and William Bradford Smith. Cary was one of the Colston boys inspired by the example of their schoolmaster, Phillips, to take to literature, and managed to get some of his works published. In later years he appears to have prospered in a worldly way. He remained a most intimate friend of the young poet, and corresponded with him to the last. Baker, who also seems to have prospered in life, emigrated to America, and got Chatterton's help in a poetic way toward the furtherance of his court-

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ship with Miss Hoyland, a Bristol girl. After Cary, William Bradford Smith may be regarded as the young poet's most constant companion; in later years he was described by his nephew, Richard Smith, as Chatterton's "bosom friend." Although Smith does not seem to have been one of the lads who met at Lambert's, he indulged in verse-making as much as any of the fraternity. He belonged to a higher grade in society than the others, but was a complete Bohemian, consorting with all ranks of people, and probably on this account was not on friendly terms with his parents. In Chatterton Smith found more than an equal, mentally if not socially, and his records of their Sunday rambles into the country are most suggestive. They were fond of walking in Redcliff Meadows: "'Come,' Chatterton would say, 'you and I will take a walk in the meadow. I have got the cleverest thing for you that ever was. It is worth half-a-crown merely to have a sight of it, and to hear me read it to you.' When we were arrived at the place proposed, he would produce his parchment, show it, and read it to me. There was one spot in particular, full in view of the church, in which he seemed always to take a particular delight. He would frequently lay himself down, fix his eyes upon the church, and seem as if he were in a kind of ecstasy or trance. Then on a sudden and abruptly he would tell me, 'That steeple was burnt down by lightning; that was the place where they formerly acted plays,' meaning, if

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I remember rightly, what is now called the Parade.' Does not this reminiscence show how deeply the young poet was imbued with the spirit of the Rowley romance, and how he had even grown to believe in the reality of his own creations ?

There were other lads who enjoyed Chatterton's acquaintance in those days, and whose association in various ways influenced his career. Thomas Palmer, a jeweller's apprentice, was one, and his records are of interest as showing how the poet gained such knowledge as he had of heraldry, a subject he introduced largely in his writings, both in prose and verse. Many of his sketches in connexion with this study are now in the British Museum.

The earliest known verses by Chatterton, other than the juvenile pieces already referred to, are some lyrics he wrote for his friend Baker to send to Miss Hoyland. One of the poet's letters to Baker, enclosing some of these verses, has been preserved, and it throws illuminative sidelights upon the writer's story at this period.

Dear Friend,—I must now close my poetical labours, my Master being returned from London. You write in a very entertaining style ; though I am afraid mine will be the contrary. . . . I am glad you approve of the ladies in Charles-Town ; and am obliged to you for the compliment of including me in your happiness. My friendship is firm as the white rock when the black waves soar around it and the waters burst on its hoary top, . . . so much for heroics !

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To speak in plain English ; I am and ever will be, your unalterable friend.

I did not give your love to Miss Rumsey, having not yet seen her in private, and in public she will not speak to me, because of her great love to Fowler. . . . I have been violently in love these three-and-twenty times since your departure ; and not a few times came off victorious. I am obliged to you for your curiosity, and esteem it very much, not on account of itself, but as coming from you. The poems, etc., on Miss Hoyland, I wish better for her sake and yours. The Tournament I have only one canto of, which I send herewith ; the remainder is entirely lost. I am with the greatest regret going to subscribe myself

Your faithful and constant Friend,
'till death do us part,

THOMAS CHATTERTON

These extracts show that the lad was engaged in versification when his master's absence from the office gave him the opportunity ; they also prove that his braggadocio about love adventures had already started, and, what is more important, that he had, in all probability, begun to work upon his Rowley poems. There is a poem called " The Tournament " in the Rowley collection, and it is very likely that the lad had mentioned something about his scheme to his friend Baker, and had forwarded this one canto of the piece to him, to learn how it impressed him. At the same time he broke into verse and sent, or at least wrote, the following commonplace lines to go with his letter :

Dear Friend,—I have received both your favours. . . .

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O'erwhelmed with pleasure at the joyful news,
I strung the chorded shell, and woke the Muse.
Begin, O Servant of the Sacred Nine!
And echo joy through every nervous line;
Bring down th' ethereal choir to aid the song;
Let boundless raptures smoothly glide along.
My Baker's well! Oh words of sweet delight!
Now! now! my Muse, soar up th' Olympic height.
What wondrous numbers can the Goddess find
To paint th' ecstatic raptures of my mind?
I leave it to a Goddess more divine,
The beauteous Hoyland shall employ my line.

These lines are about as poor as anything Chatterton ever descended to, but he was still only a boy and they were no worse than those which many of his popular contemporaries supplied for public edification. The lyrics sent for "the beauteous Hoyland," if somewhat better verse, were quite as artificial and need no quotation. Nothing is known of Baker beyond Chatterton's references to him, and it is therefore impossible to speculate upon any influence he may have exercised upon the boy's mind. In a manuscript in the British Museum Chatterton rambles along in a disconnected style to this friend, but furnishes nothing of interest.

III

FROM the conventionally worded extracts made thus far from Chatterton's verse no idea can have been obtained of the beauty and value of his Rowley poems, upon which his title to fame must mainly rest. In order to gain a

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fair understanding of the nature of these works the story connected with their evolution must be told.

It starts before the birth of Chatterton. A room over the porch of St Mary Redcliff Church was known as the Muniment Room, because it contained several chests of deeds relating to the building. The largest of these chests contained documents left by William Canynges, a very wealthy citizen of Bristol, five times mayor of that place during the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV. Money had been left for the maintenance and annual opening of "Mr Canynges' Cofre," as this chest was called, but in the course of time this arrangement had been neglected and the whole matter forgotten. In 1727 the authorities were suddenly inspired by the idea that some valuable documents might be in the Muniment Room chests, and as the keys belonging to them had been lost, they had them all forced open and their contents examined. The documents relating to the church were taken away, but the rest of the parchments, some of which might have been of historical or family interest, were left on the floor to perish.

Visitors to the Muniment Room generally regarded the scattered parchments as valueless, but some persons appropriated them for various reasons. Thomas Chatterton, the schoolmaster, deemed he could find a use for them and, assisted by his pupils, took a large quantity away. He found that some of them contained references to payments made to his ancestors

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for work done to the church, but nothing sufficiently valuable for preservation. He used the treasure trove for different purposes, on one occasion cutting the parchments up to cover twenty prize Bibles his boys had gained. Although a man of poetic and antiquarian tendencies, he does not appear to have discovered anything in these ancient manuscripts of value or literary interest. When his widow had to leave the schoolhouse she took with her such of the old parchments as had not been got rid of. Some time after her son had been at Lambert's he discovered the two boxes containing these manuscripts. The story of this discovery may be given as related by the boy's "bosom friend," William Smith. He says: "Chatterton's attention was called to the old parchments when his mother was using them for thread-papers. He had naturally become familiarized with parchments at the scrivener's office, so, taking up those his mother was using, he found they were very ancient and that the endorsements on them were written in characters different from those now in use." "Being naturally," as Smith said, "of an inquisitive and curious turn," he was greatly attracted by the circumstance, and asked his mother how she came by these deeds. She told him of their discovery in the Muniment Room. He became deeply interested in the matter, and after he had examined all the documents in her possession, he told her "he had found a treasure and was so glad nothing could be like it."

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Chatterton had probably thought over his Rowley romance by this time, and no doubt saw in these ancient manuscripts things that would assist him in his work. In them he could find antique spelling and phraseology and other items of use. As he gradually worked out his scheme, these old manuscripts doubtless suggested things to him that he had not previously thought of. He would now see how his idea of presenting his poetic myth to the world might be constructed and the public mystified. He began by attempting to write in the fashion of these documents, and in a copy-book he possessed he copied the mediæval letters over and over and over again. Some of his patient labour in this process has been preserved. In addition to studying the old deeds he continued reading the works of Chaucer and such other antique writers as he could get hold of, as well as the grammar and language of their time, his chief mistake in all this work being the confusion and admixture of the productions of different periods. As long as a word savoured of antiquity he adopted it for his Rowley manuscripts, not heeding whether it belonged to one or two centuries later. Of course he was entirely ignorant of the history and formation of the English language, his ignorance being, indeed, shared by nearly all his contemporaries.

The period during which Chatterton's visionary Rowley romance was being conjured into being was the most important epoch of his

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career. He lived a double life ; one amid an imaginary group of ideal people he had created and who appeared as real to his youthful mind as did the commonplace, selfish, and vulgar community his fate had caused him to mix with. He loved with the strong affection nature had endowed him the dear ones at home, and, apparently, still regarded with friendly feelings some of his young comrades, but to none of them did he confide the secrets of his literary labours. He speedily recognized the shortcomings of the elder associates he became acquainted with, and as soon as he discerned their faults and foibles he treated them with scant courtesy, and never scrupled about displaying their failings to the public. To none of them was he likely to reveal the mystical nature of his creations.

The historic personages introduced into the young poet's dramatic world in no way resembled their idealized characters, but his departures from fact did not lessen the beauty of his fiction. The lay figures he found in dryasdust chronicles he clothed with attributes invented by his youthful genius. His Rowley men are all persons fitted for admiration. William Canynges and his circle, Sir Charles Bawdin and his other knightly heroes, are all noble cavaliers of a better type than those supplied by ordinary humanity. There is nothing mean or worldly amongst his chosen worthies. William Canynges, about whose story so much of the Rowley manuscripts is

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concerned, is described by the boy poet as a man of enormous wealth and endowed with a generous, noble disposition. He was five times mayor of Bristol, not then a city as Chatterton supposed, and is portrayed by the lad as the founder of noble institutions such as even Colston could scarcely have conceived, as the friend of the friendless and oppressed, and, at the same time, as a poet and the friend of poets : a man of all the talents, and as acting toward the learned and literary as few, if any, men of that period would have acted. Upon inheriting the estates of his father and elder brother his thoughts reverted to his old schoolfellow, Thomas Rowley, who had just taken Holy Orders, and was living at the Carmelite Priory, upon the site of which place Colston's School was, after many years, erected. Chatterton appears to have created Rowley as the prototype of himself, but the wealthy patron who was to befriend and love him was never forthcoming in his case. Rowley is represented as calling upon Canynges to thank him for an act of kindness and to tender his services. Upon their meeting, the rich man says to the newly ordained priest, "I have a crotchett in my brayne that will need your aide." "If you command me I will go to Roome for you." "Not so far distant," says Canynges. "I ken you for a mickle learned priest ; if you will leave the parysh of Our Ladie, and travel for mee, it shall be mickle to your profits." Canynges then informs Rowley that he would like him to

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visit various abbeys and other religious houses, and purchase from them any pictures they may have to part with, regardless of cost.

The priest departed upon his journey and is said to have collected all kinds of curiosities for his Bristol Mæcenas, and to have set forth written descriptions of them, but, save Chatterton, no one could ever find any trace of these manuscripts. A few nearly illegible parchments, undoubtedly the handiwork of the young poet himself, were eventually brought forward for the inspection, at their pressing demands, of his antiquarian associates, but no one with knowledge of ancient documents could have been deceived as to their character. In almost every case the Rowley manuscripts produced by Chatterton were acknowledged by their producer to be transcripts, and in the case of "The Bristowe Tragedie," one of the finest of the set, his own authorship was confessed. As one of the earliest of the Rowley pieces, and as a poem which the lad owned he had composed himself, the "Bristowe Tragedie," frequently miscalled "The Execution of Sir Charles Bawdin," should be quoted :

BRISTOWE TRAGEDIE :

OR,

THE DETHE OF SYR CHARLES BAWDIN

The featherd songster chaunticleer
Han wounde hys bugle horne,
And tolde the earlie villager
The commynge of the morne :

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Kynge Edwarde sawe the ruddie streakes
Of lyghte eclypse the greie ;
And herde the raven's crokyng throte
Proclayme the fated daie.

“ Thou'rt ryght,” quod he, “ for, by the Godde
That syttes enthron'd on hyghe !
Charles Bawdin, and hys fellowes twaine,
To-daie shall surelie die.”

Thenne wythe a jugge of nappy ale
Hys knyghtes dydd onne hymm waite ;
“ Goe tell the traytour, thatt to-daie
Hee leaves thys mortall state.”

Syr Canterlone thenne bendedd lowe,
Wythe harte brymm-fulle of woe ;
Hee journey'd to the castle-gate,
And to Syr Charles dydd goe.

But whenne hee came, hys children twaine,
And eke hys lovyng wyfe,
Wythe brinie tears dydd wett the floore,
For goode Syr Charleses lyfe.

“ O goode Syr Charles!” sayd Canterlone,
“ Badde tydyngs I doe brynge.”
“ Speke boldlie, manne,” sayd brave Syr Charles,
“ Whatte says thie traytor kynge ? ”

“ I greeve to telle ; before yonne sonne
Does fromme the welkin flye,
Hee hath upponn hys honour sworne,
Thatt thou shalt surelie die.”

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“ Wee all must die,” quod brave Syr Charles;

“ Of thatte I’m not affearde;

Whatte bootes to lyve a little space ?

Thanke Jesu, I’m prepar’d:

“ Butt telle thye kynge, for myne hee’s not,

I’d sooner die to-daie,

Thanne lyve hys slave, as manie are,

Though I shoulde lyve for aie.”

Then Canterlone hee dydd goe out,

To telle the maior straite

To gett all thynges ynne reddyng

For goode Syr Charleses fate.

Thenne Maisterr Canynge saughte the kynge,

And felle down onne hys knee;

“ I’m come,” quod hee, “ unto your grace

To move your clemencye.”

Thenne quod the kynge, “ Youre tale speke out,

You have been much oure friende;

Whatever youre request may bee,

Wee wylle to ytte attende.”

“ My nobile leige ! alle my request

Ys for a nobile knyghte,

Who, though may hap hee has donne wronge,

Hee thoughte ytte styll was ryghte:

“ He has a spouse and children twaine,

Alle rewyn’d are for aie,

Yff that you are resolv’d to lett

Charles Bawdin die to-daie.”

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“ Speke not of such a traytour vile,”
The kynge ynn furie sayde;
“ Before the evening starre doth sheene,
Bawdin shall loose hys hedde:

“ Justice does loudlie for hym calle,
And hee shalle have hys meede:
Speke, Maister Canynge ! whatte thyng else
Att present doe you neede ? ”

“ My nobile leige ! ” goode Canynge sayde,
“ Leave justice to our Godde,
And laye the yronne rule asyde;
Be thyne the olyve rodde.

“ Was Godde to serche our hertes and reines
The best were synners grete;
Christ’s vicarr only knowes ne synne,
Ynne alle thys mortall state.

“ Lett mercie rule thyne infante reigne,
’Twylle faste thye crowne fulle sure;
From race to race thye familie
Alle sov’reigns shall endure:

“ But yff wythe bloode and slaughter thou
Beginne thy infante reigne,
Thy crowne upponne thy childrennes brows
Wylle never long remayne.”

“ Canynge, awaie ! thys traytour vile
Has scorn’d my power and mee;
Howe canst thou then for such a manne
Intreate my clemencye ? ”

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‘ Mie nobile leige! the trulie brave
Wylle val’rous actions prize,
Respect a brave and nobile mynde,
Although ynne enemies.’

“ Canynge, awaie! By Godde ynne heav’n,
Thatt dydd mee being gyve,
I wylle nott taste a bitt of breade
Whilst thys Syr Charles dothe lyve.

“ By Marie, and alle Seinctes ynne heav’n,
Thys sunne shall be hys laste.”
Thenne Canynge dropt a brinie teare,
And from the presence paste.

Wyth herte brymm-fulle of gnawynge grief,
Hee to Syr Charles dydd goe,
And sat hymm downe uponne a stoole,
And teares beganne to flowe.

“ Wee all must die,” quod brave Syr Charles ;
“ Whatte bootes ytte howe or whenne ;
Dethe ys the sure, the certaine fate
Of all wee mortall menne.

“ Saye why, my friende, thie honest soul
Runns over att thyne eye;
Is ytte for my most welcome doome
Thatt thou dost child-lyke crye ? ”

Quod godlie Canynge, “ I doe weepe,
Thatt thou soe soone must dye,
And leave thy sonnes and helpless wyfe;
’Tys thys thatt wettes myne eye.”

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“ Thenne drie the tears thatt out thyne eye
From godlie fountaines sprynge;
Dethe I despise, and alle the power
Of Edwarde, traytour kynge.

“ Whan through the tyrant’s welcom means
I shall resigne my lyfe,
The Godde I serve wylle soone provyde
For bothe mye sonnes and wyfe.

“ Before I sawe the lyghtsome sunne,
Thys was appointed mee;
Shall mortall manne repyne or grudge
What Godde ordeynes to bee?

“ Howe oft ynne battaile have I stode,
Whan thousands dy’d arounde;
Whan smokyng streemes of crimson bloode
Imbrew’d the fatten’d grounde:

“ Howe dydd I knowe thatt ev’ry darte,
Thatt cutte the airie waie,
Myghte nott fynde passage toe my harte,
And close myne eyes for aie?

“ And shall I nowe, forr feere of dethe,
Looke wanne and bee dysmayde?
Ne ! fromm my herte flie childyshe feere,
Bee alle the manne display’d.

“ Ah, goddelyke Henrie! Godde forefende
And garde thee and thye sonne,
Yff ’tis hys wylle; but yff ’tis nott,
Why thenne hys wylle bee donne.

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“ My honest friende, my faulte has beene
To serve Godde and mye prynce;
And thatt I no tyme-server am,
My dethe wyll soone convynce.

“ Ynne Londonne citye was I borne,
Of parents of grete note;
My fadre dydd a nobile armes
Emblazon onne hys cote:

“ I make ne doubte butt hee ys gone
Where soone I hope to goe;
Where wee for ever shall bee blest,
From oute the reech of woe.

“ Hee taughte mee justice and the laws
Wyth pitie to unite;
And eke hee taughte mee howe to knowe
The wronge cause fromm the ryghte:

“ Hee taughte mee wyth a prudent hande
To feede the hungrie poore,
Ne lett mye sarvants dryve awaie
The hungrie fromme my doore:

“ And none can saye butt alle mye lyfe
I have hys wordyes kept;
And summ'd the actyonns of the daie
Eche nyghte before I slept.

“ I have a spouse, goe aske of her
Yff I defyl'd her bedde?
I have a kynge, and none can laie
Black treason onne my hedde.

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“ Ynne Lent, and onne the holie eve,
Fromm fleshe I dydd refrayne;
Whie should I thenne appeare dismay’d
To leave thys worlde of payne ?

“ Ne, hapless Henrie ! I rejoyce
I shall ne see thye dethe;
Most willynglie ynne thye just cause
Doe I resign my brethe.

“ Oh, fickle people ! rewyn’d londe !
Thou wylt kenne peace ne moe ;
Whyle Richard’s sonnes exalt themselves
Thye brookes wythe bloude wyllle flowe.

“ Saie, were ye tyr’d of godlie peace
And godlie Henrie’s reigne,
Thatt you dyd choppe your easie daies
For those of bloude and peyne ?

“ Whatte though I onne a sledde be drawne,
And mangled by a hynde,
I doe defye the traytor’s pow’r,
Hee can ne harm my mynde ;

“ Whatte though, uphoisted onne a pole,
Mye lymbes shall rotte ynne ayre,
And ne ryche monument of brasse
Charles Bawdin’s name shall bear ;

“ Yett ynne the holie book above,
Whyche tyme can’t eate awaie,
There wythe the sarvants of the Lorde
Mye name shall lyve for aie.

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“ Thenne welcome dethe! for lyfe eterne
I leave thys mortall lyfe:
Farewell, vayne worlde, and all that’s deare,
Mye sonnes and lovyng wyfe!

“ Nowe dethe as welcome to mee comes
As e’er the moneth of Maie;
Nor woulde I even wyshe to lyve,
Wyth my dere wyfe to staie.”

Quod Canynge, “ ’Tys a goodlie thyng
To bee prepar’d to die;
And from thys worlde of peyne and grefe
To Godde ynne heav’n to flie.”

And nowe the belle began to tolle,
And claryonnes to sound;
Syr Charles hee herde the horses feete
A prauncyng onne the grounde:

And just before the officers
His lovyng wyfe came ynne,
Weepyng unfeigned teeres of woe,
Wythe loude and dysmalle dynne.

“ Sweet Florence ! nowe I praie forbere,
Ynn quiet lett mee die;
Praie Godde that ev’ry Christian soule
Maye looke onne dethe as I.

“ Sweet Florence! why these brinie teeres?
Theye washe my soule awaie,
And almost make mee wyshe for lyfe,
Wyth thee, sweete dame, to staie.

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“ 'Tys butt a journie I shall goe
Untoe the lande of blysse;
Nowe, as a prooffe of husbande's love,
Receive thys holie kysse.”

Thenne Florence, fault'ring ynne her saie,
Tremblynge these wordes spoke,
“ Ah, cruele Edward! bloudie kynge!
Mye herte ys welle nyghe broke:

“ Ah, sweete Syr Charles! why wylt thou goe
Wythoute thye lovyng wyfe?
The cruelle axe thatt cuttes thye necke,
Ytte eke shall ende mye lyfe.”

And nowe the officers came ynne
To brynge Syr Charles awaie,
Whoe turnedd toe hys lovyng wyfe;
And thus to her dydd saie:

“ I goe to lyfe, and nott to dethe;
Truste thou ynne Godde above,
And teache thy sonnes to feare the Lorde,
And ynne theyre hertes hym love:

“ Teache them to runne the nobile race
Thatt I theyre fader runne;
Florence! shou'd dethe thee take—adiou!
Yee officers, leade onne.”

Thenne Florence rav'd as anie madde,
And dydd her tresses tere;
“ Oh staie mye husbande, lorde, and lyfe! ”—
Syr Charles thenne dropt a teare.

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'Tyll tyredd oute wythe ravynghe loude,
Shee fellen onne the flore;
Syr Charles exerted alle hys myghte,
And march'd fromm oute the dore.

Uponne a sledde hee mounted thenne,
Wythe lookes fulle brave and swete;
Lookes thatt enshone ne moe concern
Thanne anie ynne the strete.

Before hym went the council-menne,
Ynne scarlett robes and golde,
And tassils spanglynghe ynne the sunne,
Muche glorious to beholde:

The Freers of Seincte Augustyne next
Appeared to the syghte,
Alle cladd ynne homelie russett weedes,
Of godlie monkysh plyghte:

Ynne diffraunt partes a godlie psaupe
Moste sweetlie theye dyd chaunt;
Behynde theyre backes syx mynstrelles came,
Who tun'd the strunge bataunt.

Thenne fyve-and-twenty archers came;
Echone the bowe dydd bende,
From rescue of Kynge Henries friends
Syr Charles forr to defend.

Bolde as a lyon came Syr Charles,
Drawne onne a cloth-layde sledde,
Bye two blacke stedes ynne trappynges white,
Wyth plumes uponne theyre hedde:

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Behynde hym fyve-and-twenty moe
Of archers stronge and stoute,
Wyth bended bowe echone ynne hande,
Marched ynne goodlie route:

Seincte Jameses Freers marched next,
Echone hys parte dydd chaunt;
Behynde theyre backes syx mynstrelles came,
Who tun'd the strunge bataunt:

Thenne came the maior and eldermenne,
Ynne clothe of scarlett deck't :
And theyre attendyng menne echone,
Lyke easterne princes trick't :

And after them a multitude
Of citizens dydd thronge;
The wyndowes were alle fulle of heddes
As hee dydd passe alonge.

And whenne hee came to the hyghe crosse,
Syr Charles dydd turne and saie,
“ O Thou, thatt savest manne fromme synne,
Washe mye soule clean thys daie! ”

Att the grete mynster wyndowe sat
The kynge ynne myckle state,
To see Charles Bawdin goe alonge
To hys most welcom fate.

Soone as the sledde drewe nyghe enowe
Thatt Edward hee myghte heare,
The brave Syr Charles hee dydd stande uppe,
And thus hys wordes declare:

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“ Thou seest me, Edwarde! traytour vile!
Expos'd to infamie;
Butt bee assur'd, disloyall manne!
I'm greaterr nowe thanne thee.

“ Bye foule proceedyngs, murdre, bloude,
Thou wearest now a crowne;
And hast appoynted mee to dye,
By power nott thyne owne.

“ Thou thynkest I shall dye to-daie;
I have been dede 'till nowe,
And soone shall lyve to weare a crowne
For aie uponne my browe:

“ Whylst thou, perhapps, for som few yeares,
Shalt rule thys fickle lande,
To lett them knowe howe wyde the rule
'Twixt kynge and tyrant hande:

“ Thye pow'r unjust, thou traytour slave!
Shall falle onne thye owne hedde.”—
Fromm out of hearyng of the kynge
Departed thenne the sledde.

Kynge Edwarde's soule rush'd to hys face,
Hee turn'd hys hedde awaie,
And to hys broder Gloucester
Hee thus dydd speke and saie:

“ To hym that soe much dreaded dethe,
Ne ghastlie terrors brynge,
Beholde the manne! hee spake the truthe,
Hee's greater thanne a kynge!”

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“ Soe lett hym die! ” Duke Richard sayde;

“ And maye echone oure foes
Bende downe theyre neckes to bloudie axe,
And feede the carryon crowes.”

And nowe the horses gentlie drewe
Syr Charles uppe the hyghe hylle;
The axe dydd glysterr ynne the sunne,
His pretious bloude to spylle.

Syr Charles dydd uppe the scaffold goe,
As uppe a gilded carre
Of victorie, bye val'rous chiefs
Gayn'd ynne the bloudie warre:

And to the people hee dyd saie,
“ Beholde you see me dye,
For servynge loyally mye kynge,
Mye kynge most ryghtfullie.

“ As longe as Edward rules thys lande,
Ne quiet you wylle knowe:
Your sonnes and husbandes shalle bee slayne,
And brookes wythe bloude shall flowe.

“ You leave your goode and lawfulle kynge
Whenne ynne adversitee ;
Lyke mee, untoe the true cause stycke,
And for the true cause dye.”

Thenne hee, wyth preestes, uponne hys knees,
A pray'r to Godde dyd make,
Beseechyng hym unto hymselfe
Hys partyng soule to take.

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Thenne, kneelynge downe, hee layd hys hedde
Most seemlie onne the blocke;
Whyche fromme hys bodie fayre at once
The able heddes-manne stroke:

And oute the bloude beganne to flowe,
And rounde the scaffold twyne;
And teares, enow to washe 't awaie,
Dydd flowe fromme each mann's eyne.

The bloudie axe hys bodie fayre
Ynnto foure partes cutte;
And ev'rye parte, and eke hys hedde,
Uponne a pole was putte.

One parte dyd rotte onne Kynwulph-hylle,
One onne the mynster-tower,
And one from off the castle-gate
The crowen dydd devoure:

The other onne Seyncte Powle's goode gate,
A dreery spectacle;
Hys hedde was plac'd onne the hyghe crosse,
Ynne hyghe-streete most nobile.

Thus was the ende of Bawdin's fate:
Godde prosper longe oure kynge,
And grante hee maye, wyth Bawdin's soule,
Ynne heav'n Godd's mercie syng!

He who was capable of writing this beautiful ballad may be regarded as able to have composed any of the Rowley poems. The fearless, undaunted spirit of Sir Charles Bawdin is grandly portrayed, and although his moral nature is somewhat too pronounced for the age in which he was supposed to have lived, the simple, straight-

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forward mannerisms of the old balladists are well expressed. Shelley was strongly influenced by the poetry of this piece, and copied, with impoverished language, the noble knight's remark, "summed the actions of the day each night before I slept." Few poets have used a finer touch of conscience than Chatterton's "King Edward's soul rushed to his face"; and the monarch's compulsory exclamation,

"Behold the man! he spoke the truth!
He's greater than a king!"

in its place, is equally grand. And this was the production of a boy of sixteen!

In some respects the above ballad differs from the remainder of the Rowley poems, especially in its separation from all of the personages grouped in that wonderful association, where each separate character, well worked out as it is, may be regarded as an actor in a comprehensive drama, to which all the epical and lyrical pieces are incidental. The chief dramatic person of the play is Canynge, as the head or chief in authority, but Rowley is the real hero. All the minor members of the young dramatist's production, his kings, bishops, canons, nobles, knights, citizens, peasants, with their women-folk, although all possessed of marked individuality, speak the same Rowleyese language, the invented dialect of Chatterton. Rowleyese presents few difficulties to the student when the notes appended by the author of the pieces are referred to, yet it is generally published

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nowadays in translated versions. In some cases the beauty of the verse is lessened by the use of modernized words, those selected or created by Chatterton having more poetic power, the substitution of a commonplace phrase destroying all the glamour of the poet's ideal. The best-known modernized version of the Rowley poems is that by Skeat, but, despite the utility of this work for the general student, the poetic charm of Chatterton's phraseology is frequently absent. As Watts-Dunton remarks, one "seems to miss that peculiar musical movement governing Chatterton's ear, which often renders it impossible to replace by a modern word whatsoever an archaism or pseudo-archaism of his, whether invented by himself or found."

No lengthy explanation of Chatterton's method of antiquating his own productions is necessary. C. V. Le Grice, Charles Lamb's schoolfellow and friend, after a study of the young poet's works, found the true solution of their composition in the fact that by changing the writings back into contemporary English they were *as they must have been originally written*. The whole secret was that. Chatterton wrote his Rowley manuscripts in modern English and then changed certain words into archaic, or pseudo-archaic, forms. He had a variety of words for the disguise of his documents. Some of these words were really ancient and correctly applied, others were ancient but wrongly used, and a third set was invented either to shorten or to lengthen a

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verse, or to supply a needed rhyme, or to give an archaic appearance to his work. This is practically the secret of his dialect. In order to aid him in the composition of his pretended antiques he compiled a glossary in two columns, one giving in modern English such words as he intended to use, and the other supplying their equivalents in Rowleyese. When he had obtained some practice in his system he probably discarded the glossary, but when he removed to London, and devoted himself to political writing, he seemed unable to produce any of his antiques without this key; after he obtained it from Bristol he again resorted to his old style and in it wrote the beautiful "Balade of Charitie."

The mediæval poets were very restricted in metrical forms, rarely getting beyond octosyllabic verses, rhyming each line with the preceding, or ballad metre, wherein lines of so many feet or syllables were rhymed alternately. A specimen of the first form is given by Chatterton in this "Imitation of Our Old Poets":

The matin-bell had sounded long,
The cocks had sung their morning song;

and a sample of the ballad metre may be quoted from "The Dedication of Our Lady's Church":

Before him went a throng of friars
Who did the mass-song sing;
Behind him Master Canynge came,
Tricked like a barbèd king.

The young poet did not confine himself to

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these restricted forms, but indulged in a number of metrical variations quite unknown to the old poets, some, indeed, only invented by his immediate predecessors. Not content with the many forms of rhyming discovered or invented by former poets, Chatterton even devised a new metrical arrangement of his own, and used it for some of the chief Rowley poems. It is a modification of the Spenserian stanza, so named after the author of "The Faerie Queene," the first poet known to have used it. Spenser's stanza consists of nine lines, the first and third, the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh, and the sixth, eighth, and ninth rhyming together. This plan is shown by the following extract from "The Faerie Queene" :

One day, nigh weary of the irksome way,
From her unhappy beast she did alight;
And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay,
In secret shadow, far from all men's sight;
From her fair head her fillet she undight,
And laid her stole aside: her angel's face,
As the great eye of heaven, shined bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

Into the Spenserian stanza Chatterton introduced another line preceding and rhyming with the ninth line of Spenser's and forming an independent couplet with it. As the invention of a youth of Chatterton's age and position it is a fine achievement. As Professor Skeat says : " Chatterton ought to have the full credit of inventing this stanza, and it is only one of the

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proofs of his originality." The lad used it in the *second* "Battle of Hastings," as well as in other pieces. A specimen from this "Battle of Hastings" will show its formation :

He said; and as a pack of hounds belent,¹
When that the tracking of the hare is gone,
If one perchance shall hit upon the scent,
With twice redoubled fire the alans² run;
So stirred the valiant Saxons every one;
Soon linkèd man to man the champions stood.
To 'tone for their misdeed³ so soon 'twas done,
And lifted bills appeared an iron wood.
Here glorious Alfwold towered above the wights,
' And seemed to brave the fire of twice ten thousand
fights.

Another anachronism to which Skeat called attention in regard to the antiquity claimed for the Rowley manuscripts was the use of blank verse in one of them, Chatterton having, evidently, been unaware that its first use was ascribed to Lord Surrey, in the sixteenth century.

These elaborate forms of versification, apart from many other matters of doubt, are sufficient to prove that the Rowley poems are not the work of mediæval poets, whilst the grammatical errors made in them, due to the author's ignorance of the formation of the English language at the date claimed for them, are sufficient to disprove the antiquity of the manuscripts.

The first Rowley document put before the public, in October 1768, was in prose. As the

¹ Stopped. ² Greyhounds. ³ Treachery, originally 'bewraten.

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introduction of his pseudo-antique romance it deserves notice. A much-needed new bridge over the Avon was about to be opened at Bristol. A great deal of excitement had been aroused at the completion of this edifice, and Chatterton evidently considered it a suitable opportunity for testing the effect of his manuscripts. At the end of September he called at the "Felix Farley Journal" office and left a note to the following effect :

Mr Printer,—The following description of the Mayor first passing over the Old Bridge, taken from an old Manuscript, may not be unacceptable to the Generality of your Readers.

Yours, etc.

DUNHELMUS BRISTOLIENSIS

Enclosed was a lengthy account in Rowley idiom, taken from the "old Manuscript," of a procession passing over the newly built old bridge, in which the costumes, military implements, and musical instruments of the populace were quaintly and picturesquely described. This communication was published in the "Journal" on October 1, and aroused considerable speculation amongst certain of the readers. Some of the people interested called at the office of the paper, and discovered that the description of the ancient civic ceremonies had been left there by a lad named Chatterton. The youth was hunted out and interrogated as to whence the "old Manuscript" had been

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obtained. The proud-spirited lad, annoyed at the way in which he was questioned, refused to give any information, but ultimately, when his susceptibilities had been appeased, stated that the account was from an ancient manuscript his father had obtained from St Mary Redcliff Church. Amongst the people interested in this discovery was a Mr George Symes Catcott, described by Chatterton's first biographer as "a gentleman of an inquisitive turn and fond of reading." William Smith, being acquainted with his relative Catcott's interest in the matter, took an opportunity of telling him of his friendship with Chatterton, and that the lad was in possession of several ancient pieces of poetry obtained from the same place as the manuscript about the old bridge. Upon this information Catcott sought an introduction to the possessor of these antique treasures, and eventually obtained from him, "*without any reward*," copies of the "Bristowe Tragedie" and several other of the Rowley poems.

As this George Catcott had much to do with Chatterton and his Rowley manuscripts, a few words about the man will not be out of place. He was the son of a Bristol clergyman, the Rev Alexander S. Catcott, and brother of another clerical, the Vicar of Temple Church, author of a pseudo-scientific work on the Deluge, which ultimately became an object of the young poet's frequent satire. Notwithstanding these clerical relatives, George Catcott, in hopes

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of improving his income, had entered into partnership with Burgum, a pewterer of lowly origin but reputed wealthy, and possessed of a small quantum of education. George Catcott had acquired notoriety by certain actions, as also, in a less degree, by collecting books on account of their antiquity, none of them, he boasted, being less than a hundred years old. To carry out one of his strange whims, Catcott obtained permission, by payment of a toll of five guineas, to cross the new Bristol bridge before its completion. A temporary gangway having been made by means of some loose planks over the arches, Catcott, in the early morning, mounted a horse and rode over the dangerous passage, thus gaining the distinction of having been the first to cross the new bridge. Upon another occasion he paid a similar fee to be allowed to ascend to the top of a new steeple to St Nicholas Church, two hundred and five feet above the ground, by means of a rope, and placed within a cavity there a pewter plate bearing an inscription in Latin commemorating the hazardous deed. These foolhardy pranks furnished suitable themes for Chatterton's sarcastic muse, and in some lines in his poem on "Happiness" he thus refers to them :

Catcott is very fond of talk and fame—
His wish, a perpetuity of name;
Which to procure, a pewter altar's made,
To bear his name and signify his trade;
In pomp burlesqued the rising spire to head,
To tell futurity a pewterer's dead.

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Incomparable Catcott, still pursue
The seeming happiness thou hast in view :
Unfinished chimneys, gaping spires complete,
Eternal fame on oval dishes beat;
Ride four-inch bridges, clouded turrets climb,
And bravely die—to live in after-time.
Horrid idea! if on the rolls of fame
The twentieth century only find thy name,
Unnoticed this, in prose or (lagging hour ?)
He left his dinner to ascend the tower!
Then, what avails thy anxious spitting pain ?
Thy laugh-provoking labours are in vain.
On matrimonial pewter set thy hand;
Hammer with every power thou canst command;
Stamp thy whole self, original as 'tis,
To propagate thy whimsies, name, and phiz—
Then, when the tottering spires or chimneys fall,
A Catcott shall remain admired by all.

Riding “ four-inch bridges ” is evidently a reference to “ Poor Tom ” of “ King Lear,” but some of the allusions are no longer to be understood.

Finding that there was no prospect of getting his Rowley poems made public by the pewterer's aid, Chatterton became more chary of his manuscripts. If the lad were sarcastic in his references to George Catcott, the man's treatment of him may be considered sufficient excuse. On one occasion Chatterton did suggest that he had a claim on him by presenting an account thus set forth :

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Mr G. CATCOTT,

To the Executors of J. Rowley. Dr.

	£	s.	d.
To the pleasure received in reading his historic works	5	5	0
To the pleasure received in reading his poetic works	5	5	0
	<hr/>		
	£10	10	0
	<hr/>		

The poor boy never had the pleasure of giving a receipt for his account, but his debtor ultimately obtained a considerable sum for the Rowley manuscripts.

One advantage Chatterton gained through his acquaintance with Catcott, and that was an introduction to people living in a higher class of society than that with which he had hitherto mixed, and there he was enabled to acquire habits and manners not obtainable in his previous haunts. One of his new acquaintances was the Rev Alexander Catcott, at whose vicarage, near Temple Church, he visited for a time. His friendship with the vicar did not last long, as he and the reverend gentleman soon fell out. Alexander Catcott had a great dislike to verse, judging, by what he had seen in his own family, that it had a tendency to evil. He was greatly annoyed at his brother George wasting his time over the Rowley manuscripts, and, it is believed, would have destroyed them had he got hold of them. With such views he was not likely to agree long with

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Chatterton, whom he spoke of in severe terms. The lad retaliated on the clergyman by criticizing his "Treatise on the Deluge," interspersing his attack with strong personalities. A few lines from his "Epistle" will suffice :

When you advance new systems, first unfold
The various imperfections of the old;
Prove nature hitherto a gloomy night,
You the first focus of primæval light.
'Tis not enough you think your system true,
The busy world would have you prove it too :
Then, rising on the ruins of the rest,
Plainly demonstrate your ideas best. . . .
Search nature o'er, procure me, if you can,
The fancied character, an honest man;
(A man of sense, not honest by constraint,
For fools are canvass [*sic*], living but in paint).
To Mammon or to Superstition slaves,
All orders of mankind are fools, or knaves. . . .
How are your feeble arguments perplexed
To find out meaning in a senseless text!
You rack each metaphor upon the wheel,
And words can philosophic truths conceal. . . .
Might we not, Catcott, then infer from hence,
Your zeal for Scripture hath devoured your sense ?
Apply the glass of reason to your sight,
See nature marshal oozy atoms right;
Think for yourself, for all mankind are free:
We need not inspiration how to see. . . .
Attentive search the Scriptures, and you'll find
What vulgar errors are with truths combined. . . .
But if from God one error you admit,
How dubious is the rest of Holy Writ ! . . .
Confute with candour, where you can confute,
Reason and arrogance but poorly suit. . . .

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With modest diffidence new schemes indite,
Be not too positive, though in the right. . . .
Some may with seeming arguments dispense,
Tickling your vanity to wound your sense. . . .
But oh! how lofty your ideas soar,
In showing wondering cits the fossil store!
The ladies are quite ravished, as he tells
The short adventures of the pretty shells;
Miss Biddy sickens to indulge her touch,
Madam, more prudent, thinks 'twould seem too
much.

And can the poor applause of things like these,
Whose souls and sentiments are all disease,
Raise little triumphs in a man like you,
Catcott, the foremost of the judging few?

After such an attack it is not surprising to learn that the vicar's house was closed to the saucy youth, although the poet failed to understand why his lines had given such offence. He deemed that Catcott had commenced the broil by his criticisms, and that he had a right to reply to them; having returned blow for blow, he thought the affair should end. When he found the aggrieved vicar did not regard the matter in that light, and heard through others how inveterate he was, he grew sore too, and on one or two occasions did not refrain from further uncomplimentary allusions to the "Treatise" and its author.

It scarcely needs pointing out that these sarcastic pieces, in the production of which Chatterton wasted so much time, are no evidence against the poetic power with which he was en-

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dowed. They were no worse, and in some cases better, than what his elder contemporaries were flooding the country with and, in various instances, gaining temporary reputation by, but the time spent in their manufacture turned him from the path his genius had marked out for him. Unfortunately the lad's poverty frequently placed him in the hands of men who employed him in ways which drew him still farther from his natural bent, and induced him to prostrate his talents in order to gain their aid. From George Catcott he was unable to obtain any recompense or help, so he endeavoured to make use of Henry Burgum, Catcott's partner in the pewter business.

Notwithstanding Burgum's lowly origin, on the strength of his reputation for wealth he contrived to get admitted into what Bristol deemed good society. Behind his back, however, the man appears to have been spoken of in very contemptuous terms, and Chatterton, influenced by what he heard, satirized him for his want of learning and for other imputed deficiencies. When the lad became personally acquainted with Burgum he repented his offensive language and frequently referred to him with friendliness. After his squabble with the Catcott clique Chatterton made himself useful to Burgum, and defended him from his critics in these words :

Burgum has parts, parts which will set aside
The laboured acquisitions of your pride.
Uncultivated now his genius lies,
Instruction sees his latent talents rise ;

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His gold is bullion, yours debased with brass,
Impressed with Folly's head to make it pass.

But Burgum's so loud, so indiscreet,
His thunders echo through the listening street.
Ye rigid Christians, formally severe,
Blind to his charities, his oaths you hear;
Observe his actions—calumny must own
A noble soul is in these actions shown:
Though dark this bright original you paint,
I'd rather be a Burgum than a saint.

Apparently the shrewd lad's eulogy was not all due to indignation at the vilification of a good man. It is not improbable that he was under some slight pecuniary obligation to the pewterer, and repaid him with versified praise. At any rate, the poet had gauged Burgum's aspirations for a place in society, and formed a scheme to profit by them. Calling upon the ambitious man, he informed him that he had his pedigree at home, and that it showed the pewterer was allied to various distinguished families. Burgum swallowed the bait. He asked to see the document, and within a few days Chatterton presented it to him. The so-called pedigree, set forth in an ordinary copy-book (now in the British Museum), is headed: "An account of the Family of the De Burghams, from the Norman Conquest to this time; collected from original records, Tournament Rolls, and the Heralds of March and Garter Records, by T. Chatterton." Some portion was said by the lad to have been derived from the

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Rowley manuscripts, but that the remainder had been drawn from other specified authorities by the compiler. The ambitious trader was pleased to discover that included amongst his ancestry were the Earls of Northumberland and other notabilities, and so impressed was he with this genealogical grandeur that he rewarded its manufacturer with five shillings ! Chatterton commemorates this fit of extravagance in these words :

. . . What would Burgum give to get a name,
And snatch his blundering dialect from shame ?
What would he give to hand his memory down
To Time's remotest boundary ? A crown !

Notwithstanding the utter meanness of this recompense for many hours of technical labour, the result of study and special knowledge, the lad was so pressed for money that he actually made a "Continuation" of the pedigree in another copybook, bringing the family descent down to the reign of James II, that being as far as he dared to bring it. For this further proof of his ancestral dignity the man presented Chatterton with a second crown piece. The manuscript was decorated with wonderful coats-of-arms, all as fictitious as the rest of the record. The most interesting fact connected with this De Burgham fable is that the copybook contained the first metrical piece that the lad produced as a Rowley poem. It was introduced into the pedigree as the composition of a John de Burgham in this way : "To give you an idea

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of the poetry of the age, take the following Piece, wrote by him about 1320." Then follows "The Romaunte¹ of the Cnyghte²":

The Sunne ento Vyrgyne was gotten,
The floureys al arounde onspryngede,³
The woddie⁴ Grasse blaunched⁵ the Fenne.
The Quenis Ermyne⁶ arised fro Bedde ;
Syr Knyghte dyd ymounthe oponn a Stede
Ne Rouncie⁷ ne Drybblette⁸ of make,
Thanne asterte⁹ for dur'sie¹⁰ dede
Wythe Morglaie¹¹ hys Fooemenne¹² to make blede;
Eke¹³ swythyn¹⁴ as wynde Trees, theyre Hartys to
shake.

Al doune in a Delle, a merke¹⁵ dernie¹⁶ Delle,
Where Coppys eke Thighe Trees there bee,
There dyd hee perchaunce Isee
A Damoselle askedde for ayde on her kne.
An Cnyghte uncourteous dydde bie her stonde,
He hollyd herr faeste bie her honde.

"Discourteous Cnyghte, I doe praie nowe thou telle
Whirst doeste thou bee so [harsh?] to thee
Damselle?"

The Knyghte hym assoled¹⁷ eftsoones,¹⁸
"Itte beethe ne mattere of thyne.
Begon, for I wayte notte thy boones."

The Knyghte sed, "I proove on thie Gaberdyne.¹⁹"
Alyche²⁰ Boars enchafed²¹ to fyghte heie flies.
The Discoorteous Knyghte bee strynge,²² botte
strynger the righte,
The dynne²³ bee herde a myle for fuire²⁴ in the fyghte,

¹ Romance.	² Knight.	³ Faded.	⁴ Wrinkled.
⁵ Whitened.	⁶ Yellow flag.	⁷ Carthorse.	⁸ Small.
⁹ Passed.	¹⁰ Hardy.	¹¹ A fatal sword.	¹² Foes.
¹³ Also.	¹⁴ Quickly.	¹⁵ Dark.	¹⁶ Gloomy.
¹⁷ Answered.	¹⁸ Quickly.	¹⁹ A manner of challenging.	
²⁰ Like.	²¹ Heated.	²² Strong.	²³ Noise. ²⁴ Fury.

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Tyl thee false Knyghte yfallethe and dyes.

“ Damoyssel,” quod the Knyghte, “ now comme
thou wi me,”

“ Y wotte ¹ welle,” quod shee, “ I nede thee ne fere.

The Knyghte yfallen badd wolde Ischulde bee,²

Butte loe he ys dedde, maie itte spede Heaven-
were.” ³

The explanatory notes are by Chatterton.

As Burgum was not likely to comprehend the language used by John de Burgham, Chatterton was so good as to accompany his poem by the following translation :

THE ROMANCE OF THE KNIGHT

The pleasing sweets of spring and summer past,
The falling leaf flies in the sultry blast,
The fields resign their spangling orbs of gold,
The wrinkled grass its silver joys unfold,
Mantling the spreading moor in heavenly white,
Meeting from every hill the ravished sight.
The yellow flag uprears its spotted head,
Hanging regardant o'er its watery bed;
The worthy knight ascends his foaming steed,
Of size uncommon, and no common breed.
His sword of giant make hangs from his belt,
Whose piercing edge his daring foes had felt.
To seek for glory and renown he goes
To scatter death among his trembling foes;
Unnerved by fear, they trembled at his stroke;
So cutting blasts shake the tall mountain oak.

Down in a dark and solitary vale,
Where the curst screech-owl sings her fatal tale,

¹ Know.

² To commit sin.

³ Heavenward.

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Where copse and brambles interwoven lie,
Where trees intertwining arch the azure sky,
Thither the fate-marked champion bent his way,
By purling streams to lose the heat of day;
A sudden cry assaults his listening ear,
His soul's too noble to admit of fear.—
The cry re-echoes; with his bounding steed
He gropes the way from whence the cries proceed.
The arching trees above obscured the light,
Here 'twas all evening, there eternal night.
And now the rustling leaves and strengthened
cry
Bespeaks the cause of the confusion nigh;
Through the thick brake th' astonished champion
sees
A weeping damsel bending on her knees :
A ruffian knight would force her to the ground,
But still some small resisting strength she found.

The champion thus: "Desist, discourteous knight,
Why dost thou shamefully misuse thy might?"
With eye contemptuous thus the knight replies,
"Begone! whoever dares my fury dies!"
Down to the ground the champion's gauntlet flew,
"I dare thy fury, and I'll prove it too."

Like two fierce mountain-boars enraged they fly,
The prancing steeds make Echo rend the sky,
Like a fierce tempest is the bloody fight,
Dead from his lofty steed falls the proud ruffian
knight.

The victor, sadly pleased, accosts the dame,
"I will convey you hence to whence you came."
With look of gratitude the fair replied—
"Content; I in your virtue may confide.

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But," said the fair, as mournful she surveyed
The breathless corse upon the meadow laid,
" May all thy sins from heaven forgiveness find !
May not thy body's crimes affect thy mind ! "

Another Bristolian to whom Chatterton was introduced by George Catcott was William Barrett, a surgeon, who was collecting material for a " History of Bristol " he was writing. As soon as the lad was given to understand what Barrett required he supplied him with various manuscripts and sketches relating to the city, all from the inexhaustible Rowley find. These items were chiefly in prose, and have, therefore, little to do with Chatterton's poetic pursuits, but amongst them were some of his finest metrical labours. Some of these manuscripts disappeared, and probably were destroyed by their recipient as having nothing to do with his requirements.

It is to be regretted that only a few lines of one, " The Apostate," a tragedy, have been preserved, as the theme, the conversion of a Christian to the Jewish faith, was one likely to have been dealt with by Chatterton in an original and highly suggestive manner. Another dramatic work of which some fragments have been preserved was " Goddwyn." It has been surmised that this tragedy was completed. The small portion extant evinces powerful insight into character and ability for delineating passions. The " Ode to Liberty," introductory of the matter to be enacted, is frequently quoted as

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evidence of its author's poetic power. The words are supposed to be spoken as a reply to Edward the Confessor's speech in favour of the Normans. Somewhat modernized, the lines run thus :

When Freedom, drest in blood-stained vest,
To every Knight her war song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread;
A gory anlace ¹ by her hung.

She dancèd on the heath;
She heard the voice of death.

Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale ²;
She heard onflemed ³ the shrieking voice of woe
And sadness, in the owlet, shake the dale.

She shook the pointed spear,
On high she raised her shield,
Her foemen all appear,
And fly along the field.

Power, with head upreaching to the skies,
His spear a sunbeam, and his shield a star,
Alike two flaming meteors rolls his eyes,
Stamps with his iron feet and sounds to war.

She sits upon a rock,
She bends before his spear,
She rises from the shock,
Wielding her own in air;

Strong as the thunder doth she drive it on,
Skill, closely shrouded, guides it to his crown;
His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone,
He falls, and falling rolleth thousands down.
War, gore-faced War, by envy armed, arist, ⁴
His fiery helmet shaking to the air,
Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist.

¹ Sword.

² Freeze.

³ Undismayed.

⁴ Arose.

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The chief dramatic work, however, of the Rowley collection is the "Tragycal Enterlude, or Discoorsynge Tragedie," of "Ælla." It would be a notable work for any man of genius, but for a youth of Chatterton's age is unique. Well might its author speak of it to Dodsley, the publisher, as a "beauteous piece," and describe it as "a perfect tragedy, the plot clear, the language spirited, and the songs (interspersed in it)" as "flowing, poetical, and elegantly simple"—a description which is correct in every respect, and might be supplemented by a statement that the characters of the play are carefully delineated and sagaciously placed in action. Dean Milles, to prove the impossibility of so perfect a work of art having been written by any one in Chatterton's position in life—"a youth of sixteen, born and bred in indigence, newly discharged from a school, where the intention of the establishment was fully satisfied with reading and writing well"—says it is "full of beauties that could only be acquired by a learned person of great worldly knowledge and ripe experience."

"Ælla" is prefaced by an introductory "Epistle to Mastre Canynge," beginning :

'Tis sung by Minstrels, that in ancient time,
When Reason hid herself in clouds of night,
The Priest delivered all the law in rhyme;
Like painted tilting-spear to please the sight,
The which in its fell use doth make much dere,¹
As did their ancient song deftly delight the ear.

¹ Harm.

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Rowley concludes his prefatory "Epistle" thus :

Plays made from holy tales I hold unmeet;
Let some great story of a man be sung;
When as a man we God and Jesus treat,
In my poor mind, we do the Godhead wrong.
But let no words, which chasteness may not hear,
Be placèd in the same. Adieu until anere.¹

Not satisfied with an "Epistle," a further "Letter to Worthy Master Canynge" follows, a letter replete with humour and sly hits at people who attempt to assume heraldic honours they are not entitled to, and at various other follies. Still loitering upon the way, he next supplies an "Introduction" of two stanzas, the first doubtless suggested by Shakespearean study :

I

Some comfort must it be to gentle mind,
When they have well redeemed their land from
bane,
When they are dead, they leave their name behind,
And their good deeds do on the earth remain;
Down in the grave we bury every stain,
Whilst all their gentleness is made to sheen,²
Like precious baubles rarely to be seen.

II

Ælla, the warden of this castle-stead
Whilst Saxons did the English sceptre sway,
Who made whole troops of Dacian men to bleed,
Then closed his eyes, and closed his eyes for aye,
We rouse him up, before the Judgment Day,

¹ Next time.

² Shine.

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To say what he, as taught to speak, can ken,
And how he sojourned in the vale of men.

The drama begins with an entertainment given to Ælla, warden of Bristol, and his wife Birtha upon their wedding day. Songs and ballads are sung by various performers and in various styles. A song sung by Sir Thybbot Gorges, one of the Rowley coterie, is in a lighter, brighter style than any other production of the Canynges period. As Warton points out, this lyrical piece, with its double rhymes and jaunty measure, is suggestive of the burlesque poetry of modern times :

As Elinor by the green arbour was sitting,
As from the sun's heat she harried,¹
She said, as her white hands white hosen were
knitting,
"What pleasure it is to be married !

"My husband, Lord Thomas, a forester bold
As ever clove pin or the basket,²
Doth no sort of comfort from Elinor hold,
I have it as soon as I ask it.

"When I lived with my father in merry Cloud-dell,
Tho' 'twas at my choice to mind spinning,
I still wanted something, but what could not tell,
My lord father's barbed³ hall had naught winning.

"Each morning I rise, do I order my maidens,
Some to spin, some to curdle,⁴ some bleaching;
If any new entered do ask for my aidance,
Then swiftly you find me a-teaching.

¹ Hurried.

³ Armed, but appropriate to horses only.

² Archery terms.

⁴ To turn to curds.

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“ Lord Walter, my father, he lovèd me well,
And nothing unto me was needing,
But should I again go to merry Cloud-dell,
In sooth it would be without redeynge.¹ ”

She said, and Lord Thomas came over the lea,
As he the fat deerkins was chasing,
She put up her knitting, and to him went she;
So we leave them both kindly embracing.

The entertainment is now broken up by the announcement that the Danes have invaded the country, and that Ælla must depart to lead the soldiery against them. Birtha strives to retain her newly wedded lord, but honour calls him and he has to leave her. The following day Ælla meets and defeats the invaders, but in doing so is severely wounded. Celmond, an officer under him, has conceived a guilty passion for Birtha. Taking advantage of the general's condition, he seeks Birtha and, assuring her that her wounded husband sorely needs her presence, persuades her to depart with him to the general. When the two are in a lonely wood the miscreant declares his passion to Birtha ; the lady's cries are heard by a party of the retreating Danes, who rescue her and slay Celmond. When the Danish chieftain, Hurra, learns who the rescued lady is, he generously escorts her to her husband's camp. Meanwhile messengers from home had sought Ælla and told him his wife had fled with Celmond, whereupon the wounded chieftain, in a mad

¹ Advice.

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frenzy, stabs himself. Before he dies Birtha arrives and explains everything, but too late. Ælla expires as his wife falls fainting upon him.

The characters of the drama are clearly individualized, and their actions are, as a rule, naturally portrayed ; occasionally, however, as in the impetuous self-murder of the wounded hero, their behaviour is too melodramatic for the present critical age. For any work devoted to Chatterton's dramatic possibilities many highly poetic quotations might be made from this tragedy, but here they are not called for. A pathetic roundelay sung before Birtha during her husband's absence may be given : it is one of the many proofs of the boy bard's close and sympathetic study of Shakespeare.

O! synge unto mie roundelaie,
O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee,
Daunce no more atte hallie daie,
Like a running ryver bee;
 Mie love ys dedde,
 Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
 All under the willow-tree.

Black his hair as the wintere nighte,
Whyte hys skin as the summer snow,
Red his face as the mornynge lyghte,
Cold he lyes ynne the grave belowe;
 Mie love ys dedde,
 Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
 All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick inn dance as thoughte canne bee,

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Deft his tabour, cudgelle stout,
O! hee lyes bie the willow-tree;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

Harke! the raven flaps his wing,
In the briared dell below;
Harke! the dethe-owle loud doth sing,
To the nyghte-mares as they goe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

See! the white moone shines onne hie;
Whiter is my true love's shroud;
Whiter than the mornynge skie,
Whiter than the evening cloud;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

Heere, upon mie true love's grave,
Shall the barren flowers be layde,
Not one holy saint to save,
All the coldness of a mayde.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

Wythe mie hands I'lle plant the briars
Round his holy cros to gre,¹
Elfish fairie, light your fires,
Heere mie boddie still shall bee.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

¹ Grow.

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Come, wythe acorn-cup and thorn,
Drayne mie harty's blodde awaie;
Lyfe and all its goode I scorn,
Daunce bie night, or feaste bie day.

Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

"Ælla," the young poet's mythical "Lord of the Castle of Bristol," reappears in other of the Rowley pieces. In the "Song to Ælla" the boy's favourite hero is thus confidently assured of immortality :

Oh, thou, or what remains of thee,
Ælla, the darling of futurity,
Let this my song bold as thy courage be,
As everlasting to posterity.

Another piece by Chatterton, in the Rowley collection, is mainly interesting as showing him to have been a student of Spenser, of whose "Faerie Queene" the lines are an imitation. The poem, which consists of only eleven stanzas, written in the revised Spenserian metre which the lad invented, embodies the legendary story of the British king Lochrine, a theme which has been dealt with by some of the greatest English bards. Chatterton's version is certainly as well told as those of some of his brother versifiers. A longer and more important specimen of the Rowley minstrelsy is a piece called "The Tournament," chiefly written in the same new Chattertonian metre. It is remarkable in various ways, being founded upon one of the very few prose "original" manuscripts the

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youth produced to the public. It was left in possession of the surgeon Barrett, who was, probably, not quite innocent of aiding in its manufacture. This manuscript is endorsed "Vita Burtoni," and from it the poet is assumed to have derived the story he versified as "The Tournament." This poem was written to prove that a Sir Simon de Burton, a merchant and alderman of Bristol, vowed that should he become the conqueror in a tournament held before Edward I, during Christmas 1285, he would build a church in honour of the "Holye Virginne Marye." The romantic story, as concisely and poetically treated as any of the Rowley legends, is somewhat too lengthy for complete quotation here, but, despite its melodramatic touches, some portions of it may be cited. The opening of the proceedings is announced by the herald :

The tournament begins; the hammers sound,
The coursers bound about the measured field;
The shining armour throws its sheen around;
Quaint emblems are depicted on each shield.
The fiery helmets, with the wreaths amield,¹
Support the ramping lioncel or bear,
With strange devices, Nature may not yield,
Unseemly to all order doth appear,
Yet that to men, who think and have a sprite,²
Make known that these phantasies are unright.

.
Enter Sir Simon de Bourtonne

Herald, by heaven, these tilters stay too long,
My phantasy is dying for the fight;

¹ Enamelled.

² Mind.

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The minstrels have begun the third war-song,
Yet not a spear of them hath greet my sight.
I fear there be no man worthy my might.
I lack a Guie,¹ a William ² to entilt.
To run against a feeble-bodied knight,
It gets no glory if his blood be spilt.
By heaven and Mary, it is time they're here.
I like not idly thus to wield the spear.

Many noted knights, one after the other,
venture to enter the lists, but all are successively
defeated until there is left only one stranger
knight, who has overcome every man opposed
to him, and Sir Simon de Burton. It is then
that the latter makes the vow referred to :

By thee, Saint Mary, and thy Son, I swear,
That in what place yon doughty knight shall fall,
Against the strong push of my stretched-out spear
There shall arise a holy church's wall,
The which in honour, I will Mary call,
With pillars large, and spire full high and round,
And this I faithfully will stand to all,
If yonder stranger falleth to the ground.
Stranger, be ready; I challenge you to war;
Sound, sound the trumpets, to be heard from far.

Of course, after such a solemn declaration Sir
Simon becomes the victor and builds the church
to "Our Ladie," upon the ground now occupied
by St Mary Redcliff.

"The Battle of Hastings," a quasi-historical
poem which Chatterton produced, has as
remarkable a story connected with it as
have any of the Rowley documents. One day

¹ Guie de Sancto Egidio, the most famous tilter of his age, says
Chatterton.

² William Rufus.

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Chatterton is recorded to have taken a fragmentary poem to Barrett, the surgeon, bearing the endorsement "The Battle of Hastings, wrote by Turgot the Monk, a Saxon, in the tenth [*sic*] century, and translated by Thomas Rowlie . . . in the year 1465.—The remainder of the poem I have not been happy enough to meet with."

Being pressed by Barrett to let him see the original manuscript of the poem, Chatterton had to acknowledge that he had written it himself, and, so he said, for a friend. As the orthography was similar to the other manuscripts he had produced as Rowley works, and as it was quite as meritorious a composition, no one of any understanding would have doubted the authorship of the whole collection after such a confession. That Barrett was not aware of their real author is incredible, but whatever his belief may have been the youth satisfied him by promising to bring him another, a longer "Battle of Hastings," really written by Rowley! After an interval sufficiently long to have enabled him to write it, Chatterton took the transcript of the second "Battle of Hastings by Turgotus, translated by Roulie for W. Canynge Esq.," and this the surgeon appears to have accepted as a genuine antique. This second poem on the subject, like the first a fragment, which never even reaches to the death of King Harold, is regarded as a finer poem than the first, but is evidently by the same author. Subsequently, when pressed

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by Barrett for the completion of this poem, Chatterton produced twenty more stanzas, as a completion of the work, but the chronicle is still left unconcluded. From the first version this stanza, the second, may be given :

And of his knights did eke full many die,
All passing high, of mickle might each one,
Whose poignant arrows, tipped with destiny,
Caused many widows to make mickle moan.
Lordlings, avaunt, that chicken-hearted are,
From out of hearing quickly now depart ;
Full well, I wot, to sing of bloody war
Will grieve your tender and your maiden heart.
Go, do the weakly woman in man's gear,
Depart your mansion if grim war come near.

A quotation of the first stanza from the second of these poems will doubtless suffice, for both the pieces, although containing several really poetic lines, are too long-drawn-out and tedious for the present time, whatever effect they may have produced in Chatterton's days :

Oh Truth ! immortal daughter of the skies,
Too little known to writers of these days,
Teach me, fair Saint ! thy passing worth to prize,
To blame a friend and give a foeman praise.
The fickle moon, bedecked with silver rays,
Leading a train of stars of feeble light,
With noble look the world below surveys,
The world, that wotted not it could be night ;
With armour donned, with human gore y-dyed,
She sees King Harold stand, fair England's curse
and pride.

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Further examples of Chatterton's versatility of style are displayed by certain pastoral poems, or eclogues as, following the fashion of the times, he chose to call them. The first of these pieces consists of a dialogue between two rustics, one of whom has lost his father and the other his only son in the Barons' Wars. The youthful poet thus vigorously strikes the keynote in his first stanza :

When England, smoking from her deadly wound,
From her galled neck did pluck the chains away,
Knowing her lawful sons fall all around,
(Mighty they fell, 'twas Honour led the fray),
Then in a dell, by eve's dark mantle grey,
Two lonely shepherds did a-sudden fly,
(The rustling leaf doth their white hearts affray),
And with the owlet trembled and did cry:
First Robert Neatherd his sore bosom stroke,¹
Then fell upon the ground and thus he spoke.

The second of these pieces is finer in style and more manly in tone. It sings in a triumphant manner the victorious deeds of the English troops in Palestine, under the guidance of Richard Cœur de Lion. The use of a refrain to each stanza is a noteworthy feature of the poem. The lines are recited by "the pious Nigel" and begin thus :

Richard of Lion's heart to fight is gone,
Upon the broad sea do the banners gleam;
The amenusèd² nations are aston³
To ken so large a fleet, so fine, so breme.⁴
The barquès' heads do cut the shining stream,

¹ Struck.

² Diminished.

³ Astounded.

⁴ Strong.

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Waves sinking, waves upon the hard oak rise;
The water-slughorns ¹ with a clam'rous cleme,²
Strive with the dinning air, and reach the skies.
Sprites of the blest, on golden thrones a-stead,³
Pour out your pleasaunce on my father's head.

After six more stanzas describing in vigorous language the progress of the fighting, the conclusion is related in these terms :

The fight is won : King Richard master is,
The English banner kisseth the high air;
Full of pure joy the army is, y-wis,
And everyone haveth it on his bayre.⁴
Again to England come, and worshipped there,
Drawn into loving arms, and feasted eft;⁵
In every eye a-reading naught of were,⁶
Of all remembrance of past pain bereft.
Sprites of the past, and every saint y-dead,
Such pleasures pour upon my father's head.

So Nigel said, when from the blue-y sea
The swollen sail did daunce before his eyne;
Swift as the wish, he to the beach did flee,
And found his father stepping from the brine.
Let thyssen ⁷ men, who have the sprite of love,
Bethink unto themselves how might the meeting
prove !

A discussion between a labouring man and woman and Sir Roger, the priest, is the theme of the third eclogue. The subject is thus started :

Would'st thou ken Nature in her better part ?
Go search the huts and hovels of the hind;
If they have any, it is rough-made art,
In them you see the naked form of kind.

¹ War-trumpets.
² Oft.

³ Noise.
⁴ Woe.

⁵ Placed.
⁶ Those.

⁷ Brow.

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Haveth your mind a liking of a mind ?
Would it ken everything as it might be ?
Would it hear phrase of vulgar from the hind,
Without wiseacre words and knowledge free ?
If so, read this, which I disporting penned,
If naught beside, its rhyme may it commend.

This somewhat enigmatical introduction to a discussion between a hind and a woman of the same class refers to the eternal question of the why and wherefore of wealth and poverty : why one person should enjoy the good things of this life, whilst another should exist only to produce them. The two labourers refer the matter to the parson, whose attempted solution of the mystery is anything but satisfactory, and leaves one under the impression that Chatterton's philosophy could not, and, probably, did not seek to solve the problem.

There is another pastoral poem by the youthful "Rowley," which his biographer Gregory describes as "one of the most pathetic tales I have ever read," but which nowadays may be deemed too melodramatic to excite so much sympathy. It relates the sorrows of two girls whose lovers are away fighting in the Wars of the Roses :

I

On Rudborne bank two pining maidens sat,
Their tears fast dripping to the water clear;
Each one lamenting for her absent mate,
Who at St Alban's shook the murdering spear.
The nutbrown Elinoure to Juga fair

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Did murmur low, with languishment of eyne,
Like drops of pearly dew glistened the quivering brine.

II

Elin. O gentle Juga! hear my sad complaint,
To fight for York, my love is dight in steel:
O may no sanguine stain the white rose paint,
May good Saint Cuthbert watch Sir Robert wele;¹
Much more than death in phantasy I feel;
See, see! upon the ground he bleeding lies;
Inspire some juice of life, or else my dear love dies.

III

Juga. Sisters in sorrow, on this daisied bank,
Where melancholy broods, we will lament,
Be wet with morning dew, and even dank;
Like levinde² oaks in each the other bent,
Or like abandoned halls of merriment,
Whose ghastly ruins hold the train of fright,
Where lethal³ ravens bark, and owlets wake the night.

V

Juga. When murky clouds do hang upon the gleam
Of waning moon, in silver mantle dight;
The tripping fairies weave the golden dream
Of happiness, which flieth with the night.
Then (but the Saints forbid!) if to a sprite
Sir Richard's form has passed, I'll hold distraught
His bleeding clay-cold corse, and die each day in
thought.

VI

Elin. Ah! woe-bemoaning words! what words
can shew?
Thou shining river, on thy bank may bleed

¹ Well.

² Lightning-struck.

³ Deadly.

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Champions, whose blood will with thy waters flow,
And Rudborne stream be Rudborne¹ stream indeed !
Haste, gentle Juga, trip it o'er the mead,
To know, or whether we must wail again,
Or with our fallen knights be mingled on the plain.

VII

So saying, like two lightning-blasted trees,
Or twain of clouds that holdeth stormy rain,
They movèd gently o'er the dewy mees²
To where Saint Alban's holy shrines remain.
There did they find that both their knights were slain.
Distraught, they wandered to swoll'n Rudborne's side,
Shrieked their lethal knell, sank in the waves, and
died.

This pastoral of "Elinoure and Juga" reads somewhat more poetical in the Rowley dialect from which the above version is revised, but in the original there are so many words requiring explanation that it would interrupt and destroy the continuity to give them.

One of the most noted and best known of the Rowley poems is "The Storie of William Canynge." Several lines of it are written on a vellum fragment given by Chatterton to Barrett as one of the original documents discovered in the Muniment Room at St Mary Redcliff. The endorsement is anything but legible, and when deciphered by the aid of Chatterton's transcript does not afford any evidence of the authenticity claimed for it. The "Storie," although supported by a prose transcript, produced as from another Rowley

¹ Redwater, says Chatterton.

² Meads.

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manuscript, may be regarded as a fairy tale, notwithstanding the fact that the last stanza does fit in with an ancient and little-known register of a Bishop of Worcester. The young poet had so extensive a knowledge of antique documents connected with the history of Bristol and its worthies that he was occasionally able to cite real historic data unknown to the antiquarians of his time, but more recent investigators have been able to discover all, or nearly all, the sources whence he drew his information. Rowley is supposed, in the introductory stanzas, to be reclined by a brooklet gliding to the distant Avon. Meditating upon the river's banks about the famous men who had been connected with the ancient stream, he beholds a maid arise from its waters, and knows that she is Truth.

She said, " My manner of appearing here
My name and slighted honour may thee tell;
I'm Truth, that did descend from heavenwere,¹
Goulers² and courtiers do not ken me well;
Thy inmost thoughts, thy labouring brain I saw,
And from thy gentle dream will thee adawe.³

" Full many champions and men of lore,
Painters and carvellers⁴ have gained good name,
But there's a Canynge to increase the store,
A Canynge, who shall buy up all their fame.
Take thou my power, and see in child and man
What truthful nobleness in Canynge ran."

Truth then unfolds to Rowley's vision all the good and great things Canynge did, or was said

¹ Heavenward. ² Usurers. ³ Awaken. ⁴ Carvers.

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by Chatterton to have done, including the building of Redcliff Church, until, the story told, the bell for evensong arouses the dreamer from his trance.

The youthful poet frequently recurred to the legend, of which he was the chief promulgator, that William Canynges was the leading spirit in rebuilding, or at least repairing and maintaining, his beloved St Mary's Church, and in the following verses "On Our Ladie's Church" repeats the story :

As onn a hill one eve sitting,
At Our Ladie's Church much wondering,
The cunning handiwork so fine
Had well-nigh dazzelèd mine eyne.
Quoth I—Some cunning fairy hand
Y-reared this chapel in this land :
Full well I wot so fine a sight
Was not y-reared of mortal wight.
Quoth Truth—Thou lackest knowledging :
Thou, forsooth, not wottest of the thing.
A Reverend Father, William Canynge hight,
Y-rearèd up this chapel bright,
And eke another in the town
Where glassy bubbling Trym doth roun.¹
Quoth I—No doubt, for all he's given,
His soul will certès go to heaven.
Yea, quoth Truth, then go thou home,
And see thou do as he hath done.
Quoth I, I doubt, that cannot be,
I have not gotten markès three.
Quoth Truth, As thou hast got, give alms-deeds so ;
Canynges and Gaunts could do no mo.

¹ Run.

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To those not acquainted with the history of William Canynge it may be said that the ex-mayor and benefactor of Bristol took Orders in the latter part of his career, hence Chatterton's reference to the "Reverend Father." The "bubbling Trym" is a small stream joining the Avon, whilst "Gaunts" appears to be a reference, for some occult reason, by the poet to John of Gaunt. Several other Rowley pieces allude to, or are founded upon, the restoration of Redcliff Church by the lad's ideal Bristolian, but no further quotations from them are necessary.

As fine as any of these pseudo-antiques is the remarkable poem called "The World." It was probably suggested to the receptive mind of Chatterton by the "Seven Deadly Sins" in the "Dr Faustus" of Marlowe, a poet who exercised no little influence upon the lad's imagination. There is much scenic effect produced in "The World," and it is strange that the youthful poet's admirers have not hitherto recognized this powerful work at its proper value. Minstrels clad as spirits are depicted in the piece as being summoned forth by a father to portray to his son the false allurements of "The World," and to prove to him that the accumulation of riches is the best course of life. Somewhat modernized, this drama opens thus :

Father. New to the World and its deceptive way,
This youngster, son of mine, is all my care;

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Ye minstrels, warn him how with care he stray
Where gilded Vice doth spread his netted snare.
To getting wealth I would he should be bred,
And crowns of ruddy gold, not glory, bind his head.

1 *Minstrel.* My name is Interest, 'tis I
Doth into all bosoms fly;
Each one's hidden secret's mine;
None so worthy, good, and digne,¹
But will find it to his cost,
Interest will rule the roast.
I to everyone give laws,
Self is first in every cause.

2 *Minstrel.* I am a vagrant flame
Of flick'ring melancholy :
Love some do call my name,
Some bename me Folly.
In sprites of melting mould
I set my burning seal;
To me a miser's gold
Doth not a pin avail.
I prey upon the health,
And from good counsel flee;
The man who would get wealth
Must never think of me.

3 *Minstrel.* I am the imp of Pride, my haughty
head
Would reach the clouds and still be rising high;
Too little is the earth to be my bed,
Too narrow for my breathing place the sky.
Scornful I see the world beneath me lie.
But to my betters I so little gree,²
Less than the shadow of a shade I be ;
'Tis to the small alone that I can multiply.

¹ Worthy.

² Seem.

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4 *Minstrel*. I am the imp of Usury; look around,
The airs about me thieves do represent;
Bloodstained robbers spring from out the ground,
And airy visions swarm around my ente.¹
O save my monies, it is their intent
To filch the red God of my frightened sprite.
What joy can usurers have, or day or night!

5 *Minstrel*. Vice be I hight, on gold full oft I ride,
Full fair unto the sight for aye I seem;
My ugliness with golden veils I hide,
Laying my lovers in a silken dream;
But when my untrue pleasures have been tried,
Then do I show all horrorness and rou,²
And those I have in net would fain my grip eschew.

6 *Minstrel*. I am great Death; all ken me by the
name,
But none can say how I do loose the sprite;
Good men my tarrying delay do blame,
But most rich usurers from me take flight;
Mickle of wealth I see where'er I came,
It doth my terror mickle multiply,
And maketh them afraid to live or die.

Father. How, villain Minstrels, and is this your
rede?
Away, away! I will not give a curse.
My son, my son, of this my speech take heed,
Nothing is good that bringeth not to purse.

Watts-Dunton, in his highly appreciative criticism of Chatterton, refers to the great influence the lad's metrical work had upon his immediate successors and, through them, upon

Wealth.

Depravity.

G

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the more recent Romantic school. He especially calls attention to the "new principle" Coleridge gave life to in variations he produced in certain iambic lines in "Christabel," and says that the later poet's much justly praised results had already been produced by his youthful predecessor by the "Rowley ring"; "the ring which Scott only half caught and which Byron failed to really catch at all." These variations, or transitions of metrical mood, it may be pointed out, are prominently expressed in "The Unknown Knight," one of the least known and most rarely referred to of the Rowley poems. This is only a fragment, one canto only, but a fragment lovers of poetry will wish more of, so replete with the glamour of real imaginative verse are its metrical mutations :

I

The Mattin-bell had sounded long,
The Cocks had sung their morning song,
When lo ! the tuneful clarion's sound
(Wherein all other noise was drown'd)
Did echo to the rooms around,
And greet the ears of Champion strong ;
" Arise, arise from downy bed,
For Sun doth gin to shew his head."

II

Then each did don in seemly gear,
What armour each beseemed to wear,
And on each shield devices shone,
Of wounded hearts and battles won,

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All curious and nice each one ;
With many a tasselled spear ;
And, mounted each one on a steed,
Unknown, made ladies' hearts to bleed.

III

Heralds each side the clarions wound,
The horses started at the sound ;
The Knights each one did point the lance,
And to the combat did advance ;
From Hyberne, Scotland, eke from France ;
Their prancing horses tore the ground ;
All strove to reach the place of fight,
The first to exercise their might—

IV

O'Rocke upon his courser fleet,
Swift as lightning were his feet,
First gained the lists and gat him fame ;
From West Hibernè Isle he came,
His might depicted in his name.
All dreaded such an one to meet ;
Bold as a mountain-wolf he stood,
Upon his sword sat grim death and blood.

V

But when he threw down his asenglave,¹
Next came in Sir Botelier bold and brave,
The death of many a Saracen ;
They thought him a devil from Hell's black den,
Not thinking that any of mortal men
Could send so many to the grave.
For his life to John Rumsie² he rendered his thanks,
Descended from Godred, the King of the Manks.

¹ Gauntlet.

² His father.

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VI

Within his sure rest he settled his spear,
And ran at O'Rocke in full career ;
Their lances with the furious stroke
Into a thousand shivers broke,
Even as the thunder tears the oak,
And scatters splinters here and there :
So great the shock, their senses did depart,
The blood all ran to strengthen up the heart.

VII

Sir Botelier Rumsie first came from his trance,
And from the Marshall took the lance ;
O'Rocke eke chose another spear,
And ran at Sir Botelier full career ;
His prancing steed the ground did tear ;
In haste he made a false advance ;
Sir Botelier seeing, with might amain,
Felled him down upon the plain.

VIII

Sir Pigotte Novlin at the clarions' sound,
On a milk-white steed with gold trappings around,
He couched in his rest his silver-point spear,
And fiercely ran up in full career ;
But for his appearance he paid full dear,
In the first course laid on the ground ;
Besmeared in the dust with his silver and gold,
No longer a glorious sight to behold.

IX

Sir Botelier then having conquered his twain,
Rode conqueror off the tourneying plain,
Receiving a garland from Alice's hand,
The fairest lady in the land.

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Sir Pigotte this viewed and furious did stand,
Tormented in mind and bodily pain.
Sir Botelier crowned most gallantly stood,
As some tall oak within the thick wood.

A few more stanzas complete the ballad, but do not alter the story as far as the existing fragment goes.

There are several other pieces of the so-called "Rowley poems," but enough has been quoted to display the character of the whole collection. Our quotations are made from modernized versions, giving the meanings furnished by their author's glossary, but those who would see the poems as they originally appeared in print should refer to the three-volume edition of Chatterton's works, issued under the editorship of Southey and Cottle, or to the two-volume Cambridge edition of 1842. Nothing but inspection of the poet's own manuscripts could show the original orthography and style of these works, so cruelly and largely have they been revised by Barrett and Catcott, who obtained their author's "transcripts." His mannerisms, strange as they were, in their opinion were not sufficiently antique in appearance, so before furnishing copies of them for publication they made certain revisions in them to make them agree with the pseudo-antique ideas of their contemporaries.

IV

HAVING arrived at the conclusion that none of his Bristol acquaintances would or could assist him in getting his Rowley works before the public, Chatterton determined

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to see whether any Londoner could be found to further his purpose. In the first instance he addressed himself to James Dodsley, a bookseller and publisher. He wrote to inform Dodsley that he could obtain copies of several ancient poetic pieces, written by Rowley, a Bristol priest, contemporary with Henry VI and Edward IV, and should be glad to send them to him for publication. The publisher's reply is unknown, but Chatterton continued the matter by writing to him again, stating that he had been so fortunate as to obtain a sight of the tragedy of "*Ælla*," and that, struck by its beauty, he had endeavoured to get a copy of it for his correspondent, but the present possessor would not furnish one without being paid a guinea. He further spoilt his case with Dodsley by saying, "I am unable to procure such a sum." Naturally, the publisher was set against the lad's offer by such a confession and disregarded all his statements as to the literary value of this ancient drama. If he had had any idea of perusing his unknown correspondent's wonderful manuscripts, the youth's postscript would have decided him against it; it ran: "My reason for concealing my name was lest my master (who is now out of town) should see my letters and think I neglected his business"! After such an avowal it is not surprising that the youth's offer of his manuscripts was not accepted.

This disappointment caused Chatterton to seek the advice of Barrett, the surgeon, as to whom he should apply to for assistance in

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getting the Rowley pieces published. There is little doubt that the surgeon suggested Horace Walpole ; at any rate he assisted the youth in the wording of his application to him. Walpole was wealthy, influential, dabbled in literature, and only recently had cheated the public by issuing a romance he had written himself as a translation from an ancient Italian manuscript. Here was the very man ! He had published a work styled " Anecdotes of Painting " ; therefore it was politic to allude to it, as Chatterton did in the following introductory letter :

Sir,—Being versed a little in antiquitys, I have met with several curious manuscripts, among which the following may be of service to you, in any future edition of your truly entertaining Anecdotes of Painting. In correcting the mistakes (if any) in the Notes you will greatly oblige,

Your most humble Servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON

The businesslike, concise style of this epistle is very different from the general familiar and free manner of Chatterton's other communications : it had, doubtless, been well revised by Barrett. The sample of the " curious manuscripts " was headed " The Ryse of Peynctiynge yn Englande, wroten by T. Rowleie, 1469, for Master Canynge." Curious, indeed, was this ancient history of English painting from the time when ancient Britons " dyd depycte themselves, yn sondrie wyse, of the fourmes of the Sonne and Moone wythe the hearbe Woade,"

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until the days that the walls of Master Canynge's house were painted in "a most daintie and feetyve" manner, by a great artist quite unknown to modern times. The Notes contained the most important items of this wonderful record. One declared that "the Person under whose Patronage" the works of Rowley "may appear to the world will lay the Englishman, the Antiquary, and the Poet under an eternal obligation"; whilst another note described Rowley's patron, Canynge, as the Mæcenas of his time, the "friend to all in distress." The glory of the modern man who would thus reproduce the works of the forgotten Rowley was clearly suggested.

The whole story of the Walpole correspondence cannot be gone into here; it suffices to say that the author of "Otranto," deluded into the idea that the writer of this letter was a gentleman of position, returned him a lengthy and courteous answer to his valuable information, and asked several questions about the persons named in the history; stated that he would not be sorry to print Rowley's poems, "if they have never been printed," and flattered himself that from the politeness his correspondent had shown he would sometimes give him leave to consult him. The letter in which these courteous remarks were made is, it may be stated, in possession of the British Museum authorities, duly wafered, addressed, and postmarked, although in after days Walpole, hoping it destroyed, most solemnly asserted that he had never written it. Delighted by the tone of the reply, Chatterton answered it

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at once and sent a continuation of Rowley's "History of Painting." According to Walpole's story, which is the only information on the subject, the youth also explained "that he was the son of a poor widow, who supported him with great difficulty; that he was a clerk, or an apprentice to an attorney, but had a taste for more elegant studies; and hinted a wish that I would assist him with my interest . . . by procuring him some place in which he could pursue his natural bent. He affirmed that great treasures of ancient poetry had been discovered in his native city, and were in the hands of a person who had lent him those he had transmitted to me . . . whereas it is ascertained that the gentleman at Bristol who possesses the fund of Rowley's poems received them from Chatterton."

This account by Walpole was published by him some years after the youth's death, accompanied by the statement that he had written Chatterton a very kind letter in which he said: "I undeceived him about my being a person of any interest," and also informed him that his transcripts had been shown to judges and that they were not "satisfied with the authenticity of his supposed MSS." Neither the lad's statement nor Walpole's reply has been discovered, so their real contents are unknown, but whatever their wording Chatterton was made to understand that his correspondent's discovery of his lowly position had destroyed all interest in his manuscripts. Further correspondence took place, only resulting in contemptuous and

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impertinent treatment of the young poet, who recorded his feelings in the following lines to Walpole. The good sense of his sister prevented him sending them to that "nobleman."

Walpole ! I thought not I should ever see
So mean a heart as thine has proved to be ;
Thou, who, in luxury nurst, beholdest with Scorn
The Boy, who Friendless, Penniless, Forlorn,
Asks thy high Favour—thou mayst call me Cheat !
Say, did'st thou ne'er indulge in such Deceit !
Who wrote Otranto ? But I will not chide,
Scorn I will repay with Scorn, and Pride with Pride.
Still, Walpole, still, thy prosy Chapters write,
And twaddling Letters to some Fair indite :
Laud all above thee,—fawn and cringe to those
Who, for thy Fame, were better Friends than Foes ;

Had I the Gifts of Wealth and Luxury shared,
Not poor and mean—Walpole ! thou hadst not dared
Thus to insult. But I shall live and stand
By Rowley's side—when Thou art dead and damned !

Had Walpole seen these lines, which hit off his despicable character so truthfully, he could not have treated the lad's reputation with greater malice after his death than he did. In his private correspondence to various persons he said that Chatterton "was a consummate villain, and had gone enormous lengths before he destroyed himself" ; styled him "a complete rogue," "a liar," "a forger," "a rascal," and by other discreditable terms, as also by his published writings he continually endeavoured to defame the boy's character and depreciate his works.

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V

FINDING himself unable to get Rowley put before the public, and feeling the impossibility of making a good position in his native city, Chatterton determined to seek his fortune in London. The difficulty was how to proceed. His servitude at Lambert's was degrading to his proud mind, but the terms of his apprenticeship held him in the strictest bondage. Without the consent of his master escape was impossible, and this consent he set himself to procure. According to the authority of Dr Gregory, the lad's first biographer, he had often intimated to Lambert's servants his intention to commit suicide. This having been repeated to the scrivener's mother, she became greatly terrified, but was unable to make her son take any notice of this tittle-tattle until one day Lambert found upon his apprentice's desk a document endorsed "The last Will and Testament of Thomas Chatterton." Although this strange manuscript describes in a circumstantial manner the various things the writer wished performed after his decease, and even declares that it was written "in the utmost distress of mind," and that his death would happen "tomorrow night before eight o'clock," many writers agree to treat the matter as a hoax, and an attempt to terrify his employer into getting rid of him.

Whether the lad was really so disgusted with life as to intend suicide, an act over which he

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often brooded, and at least referred to at times, as in these lines :

Since we can die but once, what matters it,
If rope, or garter, poison, pistol, sword,
Slow wasting sickness, or the sudden burst
Of valve arterial in the noble parts,
Curtail the miseries of human life ?
Though varied is the cause, the effect's the same ;
All to one common dissolution tends ;

or whether he only attempted to obtain a discharge from his situation at the scrivener's, is a matter no one can now settle. At the time the ominous " Will " fell under Lambert's notice he also obtained possession of a letter Chatterton had written and addressed to his friend Clayfield, *but had not sent off*, a somewhat suspicious circumstance. In this letter the youth thanked Clayfield for his various kindnesses, and informed him that by the time this communication reached him the writer would be no more. These discoveries, combined with the entreaties of his mother and wife, were sufficient to determine Lambert to free his establishment of so troublesome a person as this youth was, so he gave him his dismissal, that is, he released him from the remainder of his term of servitude, of which term he had only served about two years and nine months.

Chatterton's departure from Lambert's was evidently hurried, as he left many of his manuscripts and other possessions at the scrivener's. Doubtless he found temporary refuge at his mother's, as he did not leave Bristol for London

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until about April 24, 1770. Barrett is authority for the statement that the money for the lad's journey to the metropolis was provided by subscription, "most of his friends and acquaintances contributing a guinea each to it." The number of his associates able and willing to contribute even that sum toward his adventure must have been few, and the probability is that the five guineas suggested by one of the lad's biographers as the amount collected is near the mark.

Chatterton's idea of making a living in the metropolis by literature was not altogether so wild as it may be considered. He was not likely to take London by storm, nor to gain a life of liberty by his pen, but he was known to some of the publishers, and had received flattering assurances from some of them, who accepted his satirical pieces, and issued them in their scurrilous journals. Party politics ran high, and such work as the youth had recently been doing was all in favour of the popular "Patriotic" party. According to his own belief Chatterton was assured of success ; he was accustomed to assert that every man was equal to anything ; that everything could be acquired by diligence ; and that man had been sent into the world with arms long enough to reach anything if he would only extend them. His habits were most rigidly temperate ; his abstinence in matters of diet was carried to a dangerous limit, as he contented himself with bread and water, even forgoing these when he had something particular to do, on the ground that "he had

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work on hand and must not make himself more stupid than God had made him." Not only was this economy practised in Bristol, but when he went to London he remained faithful to his tenets. Of alcoholic liquor he was never known to have tasted, and it is recorded by the Rev S. Seyer, no admirer of the lad, that although Barrett made various attempts to induce him to drink intoxicants, he never succeeded in his efforts. A youth thus constituted, dowered with genius, and noted for his attractive manners, should certainly have made his way in the world, but, apart from the stupidity and dishonesty of the people whom he got into connexion with, he had qualities which retarded his progress. In the first place he suffered from intense pride, partly inherited, but largely personal; as he wrote to his real friend, Clayfield, the cause of his behaviour at Lambert's was his pride, his "damned, native, unconquerable pride." Another, worse fault was his want of truthfulness. The Rowley invention is scarcely a case in point, although that fiction led him to make many false statements, not worse, it is true, than those made by some of the greatest men; nor can his 'fairy tales' home to his mother from London be regarded too severely, seeing their kind intention; but his frequent lapses from veracity in worldly matters is saddening for one so young. The characteristic which, however, made him enemies, lost him friends, and often impeded his success in life, was his indulgence in sarcasm, often of a

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very bitter nature. Sometimes the satirized deserved what they got, but there was danger in one so young and situated as he was constituting himself the judge. There is no doubt that Chatterton often felt that he had acted too impetuously and sometimes regretted his acts, more for their effects upon the victim than upon himself. His nature was kindly, but his actions were too hasty, and apologies often came too late. His printed words show that he regretted what he had written about Burgum, and in his note of December 20, 1769, to the Rev A. Catcott he appears sorry for his versified "Epistle" to that gentleman; other instances of his repentance exist, but his remarks in his "Will" are strong evidence of his impulsive nature, and explain his true position; as he says there: "I have an unlucky way of raillery, and when the strong fit of satire is upon me, I spare neither friend nor foe."

No one understood better than Chatterton himself the dangers of his imprudent sarcasm. In his "Kew Gardens," a very lengthy piece of rhyming, replete with the strongest satire, he frequently acknowledges the folly of his proceedings, as in these lines:

Oh, Prudence! if, by friends or counsel swayed,
I had thy saving institutes obeyed,

Then, happy in a coach, or turtle feast,
I might have been an alderman at least.

Sage are the arguments by which I'm taught
To curb the wild excursive flights of thought:

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If Camplin ungrammatically spoke,
'Tis dangerous on such men to break a joke ;
If you from satire could withhold the line,
At every public hall perhaps you'd dine.
"I must confess," exclaims a prudent sage,
" You're really something clever for your age :
Your lines have sentiment, and now and then
A dash of satire stumbles from your pen :
But ah ! that satire is a dangerous thing,
And often wounds the writer with its sting ;
Your infant Muse should sport with other toys,
Men will not bear the ridicule of boys.

Or if you must persist to sing and dream,
Let only panegyric be your theme.

Make North a Chatham, canonize his Grace,
And beg a pension, or procure a place."

The youth, however, scorned all such counsel,
and, in his own impulsive way, concludes thus :

Damned narrow notions ! tending to disgrace
The boasted reason of the human race.
Bristol may keep her prudent maxims still,
But know, my saving friends, I never will.
The composition of my soul is made
Too great for servile, avaricious trade ;
When raving in the lunacy of ink,
I catch the pen, and publish what I think.

Chatterton's theological views often brought him into conflict with his Bristolian acquaintances, especially with the elder men. When only a schoolboy at Colston's his studies and surroundings had caused him to share and assert the High Church doctrines of the founder

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of the school. Then, as usual, venting his impulsive feelings in satirical verse, Wesley, Whitefield, and other Nonconformists became the objects of his ridicule. As he grew older and mixed in more educated society he heard of and saw the shortcomings of the established clergy, and put all the better-known clerical Bristolians into his pillory : in season and out of it he attempted to display the defects, real or imaginary, of Bishop Newton, Dean Barton, Catcott, Broughton, Robins, and other local divines. His knowledge of music furnished him with skill enough to scarify the pretensions of local organists : some of his lines on these forgotten notables are anything but devoid of merit. They are scarcely poetry, but are good sarcastic verse :

What charms has music when great Broderip sweats,
To torture sounds to what his brother sets !
With scraps of ballad tunes, and *gude Scotch sangs*,
Which god-like Ramsay to his bagpipe twangs,
With tattered fragments of forgotten plays,
With Playford's melody to Sternhold's lays,
This pipe of science, mighty Broderip, comes,
And a strange, unconnected jumble thrums.
Roused to devotion in a sprightly air,
Danced into piety, and jigged to prayer ;
A modern hornpipe's murder greets our ears,
The heavenly music of domestic spheres ;
The flying band in swift transition hops
Through all the tortured, vile burlesques of stops.
Sacred to sleep, in superstitious key ¹
Dull, doleful diapasons die away :

¹ Then pronounced " kay."

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Sleep spreads his silken wings, and lulled by sound,
The vicar slumbers, and the snore goes round ;
Whilst Broderip at his passive organ groans
Through all his slow variety of tones.
How unlike Allen ! ¹ Allen is divine !
His touch is sentimental, tender, fine ; . . .
He keeps the passions with the sound in play,
And the soul trembles with the trembling key.

The last two lines have been quoted occasionally for their beauty.

Many of the local men who figure in Chatterton's verse are now forgotten, or only known in connexion with their satirist's story, but toward the latter part of his life, as he became acquainted with the political names and actions of party leaders and statesmen, he aimed higher, and did not flinch from attacking those in the highest positions, not even sparing royalty itself. It was these polemical pieces which obtained for him the notice of certain London publishers and editors of low-class journals. No periodicals of the present day would venture to publish such personalities as were then everyday matters.

Chatterton arrived in London on the afternoon of April 25. He wrote a long, amusing letter home to his mother, telling her of his safe arrival "in high spirits," and giving her particulars of his journey by the coach. He told her that he had called upon four well-known publishers, including Dodsley, and had received "great encouragement ; all approved of my

¹ Organist of Redcliff Church.

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design." He asked her to "call upon Mr Lambert; show him this or tell him, if I deserve a recommendation, he would oblige me to give me one—if I do not it will be beneath him to take notice of me." He told her, moreover, that he had seen and been welcomed by various relatives, and "remains her dutiful son."

If his words may be accepted as facts, he had been seen and received encouragement from his leading London correspondents, and was, therefore, on the road to success. His first place of residence on arriving in the metropolis was not in a high-class district. He went to live with a Mrs Ballance, evidently some relation of his family, who was lodging with a good-natured, hard-working plasterer named Walmsley, in Shoreditch. The family, consisting of Walmsley, his wife, his niece, a girl of seventeen, and his nephew aged fourteen, all had kindly words for the strange youth, but evidently none of them understood him. Mrs Ballance, who said he was "as proud as Lucifer," does not appear to have admired his ways: said she wished "he would not set up for a gentleman," and excited his anger by calling him "Cousin Tommy"—he asking her if she had ever heard of a poet being called "Tommy."

On May 6 the youth wrote again to his mother, telling her, what there is every reason to believe was inaccurate, that he was to "get four guineas a month by one magazine"; that he should "engage to write a History of England

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and other pieces which will more than double that sum," and giving her other items of an imaginative character. "What a glorious prospect!" the poor lad exclaims. Then he asserts: "Wilkes," the people's popular politician, "knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here. I shall visit him next week, and by his interest will insure Mrs Ballance the Trinity. He affirmed that what Mr Fell had of mine could not be the writings of a youth; and expressed a desire to know the author. . . . I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee House, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary; an author carries his character in his pen. . . . The poverty of authors is a common observation, but not always a true one. No author can be poor who understands the arts of booksellers [*i.e.* publishers]. Without this necessary knowledge the greatest geniuses may starve; and with it the greatest dunces live in splendour. This knowledge I have pretty well dipped into."

In addition to this imaginative chatter, perhaps to some slight extent believed in by its utterer, but more especially designed to deceive his anxious mother, he stated that he lodged "in one of Mr Walmsley's best rooms," but he omitted to tell her that the room had to be shared with the plasterer's nephew, a circumstance as degrading to his pride as it was inconvenient for his nightly literary pursuits. He also asked her to "let Mr Cary

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copy the letters on the other side, and give them to the persons for whom they are designed, if not too much labour for him.”

This paragraph proves that his old school-fellow, Cary, was still on the most friendly terms with him. The enclosures are short notes to his scribbling acquaintances in Bristol, to let them know of his articles in the London magazines, and to tell them to send their pieces to him for publication, as a proof of his influence with metropolitan journals.

From his letters home, despite their fictitious statements, and the information subsequently obtained from the Walmsleys, supplemented by a few minor records, some idea of the youth's proceedings in London may be gained. He appears to have got on very well with his landlord and his family, but Mrs Ballance did not believe in his “poetings.” After he had lived with her for two or three weeks she advised him to get a situation in some office, which advice so upset him that he “stormed about the room like a madman, and frightened her not a little by telling her he hoped very soon to be sent prisoner to the Tower, which would make his fortune.” Just now he was busy with his pen, especially at night, writing articles which, he said, might get him sent to the Tower, or, as he wrote in his next letter home, might get him tried by the House of Lords, as one of his publishers had been. His fortune, however, did not procure him the notice of State prosecution, although his works probably did something

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toward obtaining that honour for some of their publishers. His next letter explains these matters to his mother, who was, doubtless, more startled than amused by his manner of addressing her :

King's Bench, for the present.

May 14, 1770.

Dear Madam,—Don't be surprised at the name of the place. I am not here as a prisoner. Matters go on swimmingly ; Mr Fell having offended certain persons, they have set his creditors upon him, and he is safe in the King's Bench. I have been bettered by this accident : his successors in the "Freeholder's Magazine," knowing nothing of the matter, will be glad to engage me on my own terms. Mr Edmunds has been tried before the House of Lords, sentenced to pay a fine, and thrown into Newgate. His misfortunes will be to me of no little service. Last week, being in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, I contracted an immediate acquaintance (which you know is no hard task to me) with a young gentleman in Cheapside ; partner in a music shop, the greatest in the city. Hearing I could write, he desired me to write a few songs for him : this I did the same night, and conveyed them to him the next morning. These he showed to a Doctor in Music, and I am invited to treat with this Doctor, on the footing of a composer, for Ranelagh and the Gardens. *Bravo, hey boys, up we go !*—Besides the advantage of visiting these expensive and polite places gratis, my vanity will be fed by the sight of my name in copper-plate, and my sister will receive a bundle of printed songs, the words by her brother. These are not all my acquisitions ; a gentleman who knows me at the Chapter, as an author, would have introduced me as a companion to the young Duke of Northumber-

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land, in his intended general tour. But, alas ! I spake no tongue but my own !—But to return once more to a place I am sickened to write of, Bristol. Though, as an apprentice, none had greater liberties, yet the thoughts of servitude killed me : now I have that for my labour I always reckoned the first of my pleasures, and have still, my liberty. As to the Clearance, I am ever ready to give it ; but really I understand so little of the law that I believe Mr Lambert must draw it. . . .

I will get some patterns worth your acceptance, and wish you and my sister would improve yourselves in drawing, as it is here a valuable and never-failing acquisition.—My box shall be attended to ; I hope my books are in it—if not, send them ; and particularly Catcott's Hutchinsonian jargon on the Deluge, and the MS. Glossary, composed of one small book, annexed to a larger. . . .

Here follows a quantity of amusing chatter and scandal about various Bristolians needless to repeat. He then proceeds :

I promised, before my departure, to write to some hundreds, I believe ; but, what with writing for publications, and going to places of public diversion, which is as absolutely necessary to me as food, I find but little time to write to you. As to Mr Barrett, Mr Catcott, Mr Burgum, etc., etc., they rate literary lumber so low that I believe an author, in their estimation, must be poor indeed ! But here matters are otherwise ; had Rowley been a Londoner, instead of a Bristowyan, I could have lived by copying his works.—In my humble opinion, I am under very few obligations to any person in Bristol : one, indeed, has obliged me ; but as most do, in a manner which makes

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his obligation no obligation. My youthful acquaintances will not take it in dudgeon that I do not write oftener to them than I believe I shall ; but, as I had the happy art of pleasing in conversation, my company was often liked, where I did not like : and to continue a correspondence under such circumstances would be ridiculous. Let my sister improve in copying music, drawing, and everything which requires genius : in Bristol's mercantile style, those things may be useless, if not a detriment to her ; but here they are highly profitable. . . . Intended writing on the Duke of Bedford relative to the Trinity House ; but his Grace is dangerously ill. My grandmother, I hope, enjoys the state of health I left her in. . . .

THOMAS CHATTERTON

Amongst much in this letter which must be regarded as mere imagination on the writer's part one item of gossip is proved to have been fact. His songs were shown to a doctor of music, Dr Samuel Arnold, the famous composer, and the result was that the lad wrote the burletta of "The Revenge," for Marylebone Gardens, as will be referred to hereafter. He wanted his copy of Catcott's work on "The Deluge," as he had written in it some of his own poems which were still unprinted, and his manuscript glossary, as it was the key to his Rowley dialect, and without it he seemed unable to produce any more of his pseudo-antique writings. By this time he had begun to discover that his view of earning a good living by his pen was nothing but one of those hallucinations to which his life was exposed. In a little

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pocket-book which his sister gave him when he left home he recorded his small cash account, and from this pathetic relic, now in the Bristol Museum, may be learnt how cruelly the inexperienced lad was robbed by the men he wrote for. Whilst some of the publishers obtained articles from him for which they paid nothing, others gave him the most trivial sums, and the sadness of the account is enhanced by two items: that he *lent* some of his miserable earnings to others, and that, as the last existing leaf shows, there were ten pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence then due to him, a sum he probably never received. He wrote day and night continually, and turned out an immense amount of work in the few months he was in London, during which time the largest honorarium he ever received was five guineas paid him for "The Revenge." A large portion of this sum was laid out in purchases for the dear ones at home, instead of being expended for his own necessities. Writing to his sister on May 30, in a letter filled with his usual high-flown fantasies, he intimates more than once that money is not always forthcoming. Dating from Tom's Coffee House, a place frequented by literary men, he says :

My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort.—To begin with, what every female conversation begins with, dress. I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company ; this last article always brings me interest. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a Lord (a Scotch one,

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indeed), who is going to advance pretty deeply into the bookselling branches : I shall have lodging and boarding, genteel and elegant, gratis : this article, in the quarter of the town he lives, with worse accommodations, would be £50 per annum. I shall have, likewise, no inconsiderable premium ; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage ; I will send you two silks this summer ; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in numbers the beginning of the next winter. As this will not, like writing political essays, oblige me to go to the coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it ; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry, and every collegiate church near ; not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me expensive. The Manuscript Glossary I mentioned in my last must not be omitted. If money flowed as fast upon me as honours I would give you a portion of £5000. You have doubtless heard of the Lord Mayor's remonstrating and addressing the King : but it will be a piece of news to inform you that I have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received ; perhaps better than it deserved ; and I waited on his Lordship to have his approbation to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could ; and warmly invited me to call on him again. The rest is a secret. —But the devil of the matter is, there is no money to be got on this side of the question. Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and if

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I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party. I might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrook, an East India Director, as qualified for an office no ways despicable ; but I shall not take a step to the sea, whilst I can continue on land. I went yesterday to Woolwich to see Mr Wensley ; he is paid to-day. *The artillery is no unpleasant sight if we bar reflection and do not consider how much mischief it may do.* Greenwich Hospital and St Paul's Cathedral are the only structures which could reconcile me to anything out of the Gothic. Mr Carty will hear from me soon : multiplicity of literary business must be my excuse. I condole with him, and my dear Miss Sandford, in the misfortunes of Mrs Carty : my physical advice is, to leech her temples plentifully : keep her very low in diet ; as much in the dark as possible. Nor is this last prescription the advice of an old woman : whatever hurts the eyes affects the brain : and the particles of light, when the sun is in the summer signs, are highly prejudicial to the eyes ; and it is from this sympathetic effect that the head-ache is general in summer. But, above all, talk to her but little, and never contradict her in anything. This may be of service. I hope it will. Did a paragraph appear in your paper of Saturday last, mentioning the inhabitants of London's having opened another view of St Paul's ; and advising the corporation, or vestry of Redcliffe, to procure a more complete view of Redclift Church ? . . .

Essay-writing has this advantage, you are sure of constant pay ; and when you have once wrote a piece which makes the author enquired after, you may bring the booksellers to your own terms. Essays on the patriotic side fetch no more than what the copy is sold for. As the patriots themselves are searching for

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a place, they have no gratuities to spare. So says one of the beggars, in a temporary alteration of mine, in the " Jovial Crew " :

" A patriot was my occupation,
It got me a name but no pelf:
Till, starv'd for the good of the nation,
I begg'd for the good of myself.
Fal, lal, etc.

" I told them, if 'twas not for me,
Their freedoms would all go to pot;
I promis'd to set them all free,
But never a farthing I got.
Fal, lal, etc."

On the other hand, unpopular essays will not even be accepted, and you must pay to have them printed; but then you seldom lose by it. Courtiers are so sensible of their deficiency in merit, that they generally reward all who know how to daub them with the appearance of it. To return to private affairs. . . . With the usual ceremonies to my mother and grandmother; and sincerely, without ceremony, wishing them both happy; when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so. . . . I remain, as I ever was, yours, etc., to the end of the chapter,

THOMAS CHATTERTON

Of course, a large portion of the contents of this, as of his other letters home, must be accepted with reserve. The youth had got into such a habit of bragging about his grand associations and doings that, even if he had not persuaded himself of their verity, he could not refrain from striving to make others, especially those at home, believe in their reality. The

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poor lad who was existing on bread and water, and whose earnings at their best are reckoned at a pound a week, had not much prospect of "dressing fashionably," becoming companion to a wealthy nobleman, and travelling to cathedral cities. His visits to the Lord Mayor, ducal company, and so forth may have deluded his loving relatives for the time, but biographers of Rowley's author should know better. His "physical" advice for Mrs Carty may have been prompted by good intentions, and his wish to make his mother and grandmother happy, only needing the "power to make them so," is the only part of his letter which may be regarded as unalloyed truth.

Meanwhile, as time went on, the lad's prospects did not improve. His writings, in prose or verse, of the scandals current about statesmen and other persons in high places, doubtless as false as such political libels on those in power generally are, could no longer be accepted. The Ministry suddenly determined to notice and suppress all these defamatory charges, and took proceedings against the publishers of them. Chatterton himself, of course, was outside the sphere of those proceeded against ; he was neither sent to the Tower nor committed to Newgate, as he had anticipated, but the chief means of livelihood by his pen was extinguished. Whether he had an interview with the Lord Mayor or not, he sought to make money out of the patriotic position of the city's chief magistrate. He obtained publication in the

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"Political Register" for June 1770, over the signature of "Probus," of a letter setting forth in vehement language the wrongs from which the country was supposed to be suffering from those in power, and thanking Lord Mayor Beckford in most flattering terms for the manner in which he upheld the rights of those being wronged—that is to say, of those out of office.

There is every reason to believe that Beckford did see this letter, but whether he took any notice of it is uncertain. Its publication encouraged Chatterton to write a second epistle for issue in the same way, and it was in type, ready for publication, when, to the dismay of its author and other partisans of the Lord Mayor, the sudden death of his lordship took place. Doubtless the youth had anticipated some good results from these highly spiced articles and was greatly upset at Beckford's decease. Mrs Ballance said he was quite out of his mind for a time and declared he was ruined. With his general elasticity of temperament he quickly recovered his mental vigour, wrote an elegy on the departed patriot, and obtained its publication, after which he resumed his usual literary labours.

On June 19 the lad is seen writing home to his sister in a strain of forced gaiety. He tells her he has caught "an horrid cold," through having stood half dressed at the bedroom window, very early Monday morning, after having written all night, listening to the doleful singing of a woman whose voice reminded him

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of some Bristol girl's. Unintelligible and, indeed, illegible matter follows, the conclusion, written ten days later, being that his cold is over and gone. There is no information or any of his usual braggadocio in this letter, which seems only to have been written to let those at home know he was still jogging along. Somewhere about the same time he found time to write a long letter to Cary, starting with the two lines of verse :

Dear Arran ! now prepare to smile,
Be friendly, read, and laugh awhile ;

followed by this prose :

But, by the Lord, I have business of more importance than poetry ! As I wanted matter for a sheet in the "Town and Country Magazine" you will see this in print metamorphosed into high life. You accuse me of partiality in my panegyric on Mr Allen. Pardon me, my dear friend, but I believe there are very few in Bristol who know what music is. . . . Step into Redcliff Church, look at the noble arches, observe the symmetry, the regularity of the whole ; how amazing must that idea be which can comprehend at once all that magnificence of architecture : do not examine one particular beauty, or dwell upon it minutely ; take the astonishing whole into your empty pericranium, and think what the architect of that pile was in building Allen is in music. . . . What a clash of harmony Allen dashes upon the soul. . . . I am afraid, my dear friend, you do not understand the merit of a full piece ; if you did you would confess to me that Allen is the only organist you have in Bristol. . . . If you have not music enough to enter into a dispute with me on the merits of Mr Allen, engage

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one who has to throw down the gauntlet, and I shall be ever ready to take it up.

A song of mine is a great favourite with the town on account of the fulness of the music. . . . You will see that and twenty more in print after the season is over. I yesterday heard several airs of my burletta sung to the harpsichord, horns, flutes, bassoons, hautboys, violins, etc., and will venture to pronounce, from the excellence of the music, that it will take the town. . . . I am surprised you took no notice of the last "London"; in that, and the magazine coming out to-morrow, are the only two pieces I have the vanity to call poetry. . . . The printers of the daily publications are all frightened out of their patriotism, and will take nothing unless 'tis moderate or ministerial. I remain, yours, etc.,

T. CHATTERTON

The burletta shall be referred to presently, but its instrumental accompaniment was doubtless largely evolved from its author's excessive imagination. "The African Eclogues," the "two pieces" above referred to, the youth was justly proud of: they have received the warmest praise from leading poets, and, as Professor Skeat justly said, "Malone was quite correct in saying that had the African poems been written in the Rowleian dialect, and Rowley's 'eclogues' in modern English, no critic could possibly have put a difference between Chatterton and Rowley."

Besides the two poems Chatterton refers to he had also written another "African Eclogue," dated January 3, 1770, which he was unable to get published, although it was no unworthy com-

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panion to those which had been issued. "Heccar and Gaira," this piece, opens thus :

Where the rough Caigra rolls the surgy wave,
Urging his thunders through the echoing cave;
Where the sharp rocks, in distant horror seen,
Drive the white currents through the spreading green ;
Where the loud tiger, pawing in his rage,
Bids the black archers of the wilds engage ;
Stretched on the sand two panting warriors lay,
In all the burning torments of the day.
Their bloody javelins reeked one living steam,
Their bows were broken at the roaring stream.

"Narva and Mored " and "The Death of Nicou," the two poems of the letter, appeared in the "London Magazine " for May and June. The following extracts will show the style and power of these compositions :

Recite the loves of Narva and Mored,
The priest of Chalma's triple idol said.
High from the ground the youthful warriors sprung,
Loud on the concave shell the lances rung :
In all the mystic mazes of the dance,
The youths of Bonny's burning sands advance,
Whilst the soft virgin panting looks behind,
And rides upon the pinions of the wind ;
Ascends the mountain's brow, and measures round
The steepy cliffs of Chalma's sacred ground.
Chalma, the god whose noisy thunders fly
Through the dark covering of the midnight sky,
Whose arm directs the close-embattled host,
And sinks the labouring vessels on the coast ;
The guardian god of Afric and the isles,
Where Nature in her strongest vigour smiles ;

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Where the blue blossom of the forky thorn
Bends with the nectar of the opening morn.

The flying terrors of the war advance,
And round the sacred oak repeat the dance.
Furious they twist around the gloomy trees,
Like leaves in autumn twirling with the breeze.
So, when the splendour of the dying day
Darts the red lustre of the watery way,
Sudden beneath Toddida's whistling brink
The circling billows in wild eddies sink,
Whirl furious round and the loud bursting wave
Sinks down to Chalma's sacerdotal cave,
Explores the palaces on Zira's coast,
Where howls the war-song of the chieftain's ghost.

Where the pale children of the feeble sun,
In search of gold, through every climate run :
From burning heat to freezing torments go,
And live in all vicissitudes of woe.

Their lives were transient as the meadow-flower,
Ripened in ages, withered in an hour.

Narva was beauteous as the opening day
When on the spangling waves the sunbeams play.

Where the sweet Zinsa spreads its matted bed,
Lived the still sweeter flower, the young Mored.

She saw and loved ! and Narva too forgot
His sacred vestment and his mystic lot.
Long had the mutual sigh, the mutual tear,
Burst from the breast and scorned confinement there ;

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Locked in each other's arms, from Hyga's cave
They plunged relentless to a watery grave ;
And falling murmured to the powers above,
" Gods ! take our lives unless we live to love."

" The Death of Nicou " is the finest and most vigorous of these pieces : the rhythm is richer and the versification most masterly. The author doubtless deemed himself entitled to name an imaginary African river Tiber, as anything else of a musical sound, notwithstanding the fact that title already belonged to a Roman stream. The poem proceeds thus :

On Tiber's banks, Tiber, whose waters glide
In slow meanders down to Gaigra's side ;
And circling all the horrid mountain round,
Rushes impetuous to the deep profound ;
Rolls o'er the ragged rocks with hideous yell ;
Collects its waves beneath the earth's vast shell :
There for a while in loud confusion hurled,
It crumbles mountains down, and shakes the world,
Till borne upon the pinions of the air,
Through the rent earth the bursting waves appear ;
Fiercely propelled the whitened billows rise,
Break from the cavern and ascend the skies :
Then lost and conquered by superior force,
Through hot Arabia holds its rapid course.
On Tiber's banks, where scarlet jasmines bloom,
And purple aloes shed a rich perfume ;
Where, when the sun is melting in his heat,
The reeking tigers find a cool retreat,
Bask in the sedges, lose the sultry beam,
And wanton with their shadows in the stream.

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So when arrived at Gaigra's highest steep
We view the wide expansion of the deep,
See, in the gilding of her watery robe,
The quick declension of the circling globe,
From the blue sea a chain of mountains rise,
Blended at once with water and with skies,
Beyond our sight in vast extension curled,
The check of waves, the guardians of the world.

Nicou, immortal in the sacred song,
Held the red sword of war, and led the strong ;
From his own tribe the sable warriors came,
Well tried in battle, and well known in fame,
Nicou, descended from the god of war
Who lived coeval with the morning star :

The mighty Nicou, furious, wild and young,
Who led the embattled archers to the field,
And bore a thunderbolt upon his shield :
That shield his glorious father died to gain,
When the white warriors fled along the plain,
When the full sails could not provoke the flood,
Till Nicou came and swelled the seas with blood.

Long had the gods endeavoured to destroy
All Nicou's friendship, happiness, and joy :
They sought in vain, till Vicat, Vichon's son,
Never in feats of wickedness outdone,
Saw Nica, sister to the Mountain-king,
Dressed beautiful with all the flowers of spring.

He saw, he loved, and burning with desire,
Bore the soft maid from brother, sister, sire.
Pining with sorrow, Nica faded, died,
Like a fair aloe in its morning pride.

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. . . Oh ! need I tell

That Nicou conquered, and the lover fell :
His breathless army mantled all the plain,
And Death sat smiling on the heaps of slain.
The battle ended, with his reeking dart
The pensive Nicou pierced his beating heart :
And to his mourning valiant warriors cried,
“ I and my sister’s ghost are satisfied.”

Reference has already been made to a burletta called “ The Revenge,” which Chatterton wrote for Dr Samuel Arnold. The copyright of this spirited production was purchased, for the miserable price of five guineas, by Mr Luffman Atterbury, of the Marylebone Gardens, evidently for presentation at that place of amusement. The manuscript of the agreement, dated July 6, 1770, is now in the British Museum ; it is in Chatterton’s handwriting. The youth had inherited his father’s love of music, and, slight as his technical knowledge of it may have been, was able to adapt his verse to the different requirements of recitative, solo, duet, and chorus. The burletta was dramatically worked out. It is chiefly concerned with matrimonial squabbles between Juno, the shrew, and Jupiter, the faithless husband, complicated by an under-plot carried out by the malicious Cupid. The play is too lengthy for quotation, but some slight idea of the smart or brilliant changes with which the piece is filled may be derived from a few short selections. After a controversy with his wife, Jupiter breaks into song :

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What is love ? the wise despise it ;
'Tis a bubble blown for boys :
Gods and heroes should not prize it,
Jove aspires to greater joys.

To which Juno replies :

What is love ? 'tis Nature's treasure,
'Tis the storehouse of her joys ;
'Tis the highest heaven of pleasure,
'Tis a bliss which never cloy.

The husband runs away without stopping to listen to his troublesome spouse, when Cupid enters to inform her of Jupiter's assignation with Maia. Unable to keep the secret, he tells her :

His mighty godship in a fiery flurry
Met me just now—confusion to his hurry !
I stopt his way, forsooth, and, with a thwack,
He laid a thunderbolt across my back :
Bless me !—I feel it now—my short ribs ache yet—
I vowed revenge, and now, by Styx, I'll take it.
Miss Maia, in her chamber, after nine,
Receives the thunderer, in his robes divine.
I undermined it all ; see, here's the letter—
Could dukes spell worse, whose tutors spelt no better ?
You know false spelling now is much the fashion—

Having agreed with Juno how to spoil her husband's scheme, Cupid sings :

How often in the marriage state
The wise, the sensible, the great,
Find misery and woe ;
Though, should we dive in Nature's laws
To trace the first primæval cause,
The wretch is self-made so.

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Bacchus now staggers in, and sings over his bowl :

Rosy, sparkling, powerful wine,
All the joys of life are thine!
Search the drinking world around,
Bacchus everywhere sits crowned:
Whilst we lift the flowing bowl,
Unregarded thunders roll.

Air changes

Since man, as says each bearded sage,
Is but a piece of clay,
Whose mystic moisture's lost by age,
To dust it fades away;
'Tis orthodox beyond a doubt,
That drought will only fret it.
To make the brittle stuff hold out,
Is thus to drink and wet it.

The drunken deity invites Cupid to drink, but, inspired by the author's hatred of the liquid, the little mischief-maker cries :

Hence, monster, hence ! I scorn thy flowing bowl,
It prostitutes the sense, degenerates the soul !

To which Bacchus responds :

Gadso, methinks the youngster's woundy moral !
He plays with ethics like a bell and coral.

Air

'Tis madness to think:
To judge ere you drink,—
The bottle all wisdom contains:
Then let you and I
Now drink the bowl dry,
We both shall grow wise for our pains.

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Cupid. The charms of wine cannot compare
With the soft raptures of the fair :
Can drunken pleasures ever find
A place with love and womankind ?

Can the full bowl pretend to vie
With the soft languish of the eye ?
Can the mad roar our passions move
Like gentle breathing sighs of love ?

After much squabbling between Bacchus and Cupid as to the comparative pleasures gained by love of wine and woman's love, the little god contrives to wound his opponent with his terrible arrow. Bacchus, driven by the force of his passion, attempts to oust Jupiter in Maia's love, singing :

The man that has no friend at court
Must make the laws confine his sport ;
But he that has, by dint of flaws,
May make his sport confine the laws.

A scene of confusion is created by the failure of Cupid's plots, but an explanation being called for and furnished, a general reconciliation is effected. The mischievous little deity winds up with the following air to the audience :

For you, ye fair, whose heavenly charms
Make all my arrows useless arms,
For you shall Handel's lofty flight
Clash on the listening ear of night,
And the soft, melting, sinking lay
In gentle accents die away :
And not a whisper shall appear
Which modesty would blush to hear.

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These detached extracts can give but a poor idea of this brilliant burletta. Although the lines may be refused the name of poetry by a rigid censor, they are full of spirit, and marvellous examples of their author's versatility and wide knowledge of the world. How a youth of Chatterton's age and position could have gained such a precocious insight into life is one of the marvels of his career. In this drama the metre is most skilfully used, and the whole work harmoniously executed. The shrewdness displayed in the portrayal of temperament and character in "The Revenge" and in some of the Rowley pieces, particularly in the fragmentary "Woman of Spirit," together with his quick sense of dramatic effect, confirm the opinion that had his life been prolonged he would have become the leading dramatist of his age.

With the five guineas he received for his burletta he immediately purchased gifts, as detailed in a letter of July 8, 1770, for the dear ones at home.

Dear Mother,—I send you in the box, six cups and saucers, with two basons for my sister.—If a china teapot and creampot is, in your opinion, necessary, I will send them ; but I am informed that they are unfashionable, and that the red china, which you are provided with, is more in use. A cargo of patterns for yourself, with a snuffbox, right French, and very curious in my opinion.

Two Fans—the silver one is more grave than the other—which would suit my sister best ? But that I leave to you both. . . .

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Some Bristol herb snuff for my grandmother : some trifles for Thorne. Be assured whenever I have the power, my will won't be wanting to testify that I remember you.

Yours,

T. CHATTERTON

N.B.—I shall forestall your intended journey and pop down upon you at Christmas. I could have wished you had sent my red pocket-book, as 'tis very material. . . .

Direct for me at Mrs Angel's, sack-maker, Brook Street, Holborn.

From the above letter it will be seen that the youth had removed from the Walmsleys'. He left without giving any explanation as to the cause. The district was quite away from all parts of the town in which he could have had any business to transact, but he may not have been able to pay his landlady and some other small demands until he obtained his five guineas, and could not, therefore, leave sooner. And he would not have liked his mother, or other Bristol relatives, to find him in such shabby surroundings and hear from Mrs Ballance of his bread-and-water diet, or that, as she said, he seemed "to live on air"; or from his landlady that she did not know "anything poet-folks were good for, but to sit in a dirty cap and gown in a garret, and at last to be starved." These words of the good woman were, alas! but too prophetic in those days. The account the Walmsleys gave of the poor lad, as he appeared to them, was anything but bad or unfriendly.

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Mrs Walmsley asserted "she never saw any harm of him—he never mislisted [*sic*] her." He was always very civil whenever they met, but would never suffer the room in which he used to read and write to be swept : he said "poets hated brooms." During the nine weeks he was at her house he never stopped out after the family hours, which were evidently early, except once, when he did not come home all night ; and that night Mrs Ballance says he lodged at a relative's, because the Walmsleys' house was shut up when he came home.

The plasterer said there was "something manly and pleasing about him, and that he did not dislike the wenches," which was supplemented by the niece, who, for her part, always took him "more for a mad boy than for anything else, he would have such flights and vagaries" ; and, "but for his face and her knowledge of his age, she should never have thought him a boy, he was so manly, and so much himself." She added, "he was good-tempered, and agreeable, and obliging, but sadly proud and haughty ; nothing was too good for him, nor was anything to be too good for his grandmother, mother, and sister hereafter. . . . He used to sit up almost all night reading and writing. . . . Her brother said he was afraid to lie with him ; for, to be sure, he was a spirit, and never slept ; for he never came to bed till it was morning, and then, for what he saw, never closed his eyes."

Walmsley's nephew said, "notwithstanding his pride and haughtiness, it was impossible to

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help liking " Chatterton ; that " he lived chiefly upon a bit of bread, or a tart, and some water ; but he once or twice saw him take a sheep's tongue out of his pocket. . . . He never came to bed till very late, sometimes three or four o'clock, and was always awake when he [the nephew] waked ; and got up at the same time, about five or six. Almost every morning the floor was covered with pieces of paper not so big as sixpences, into which he had torn what he had been writing before he came to bed."

On July 11 Chatterton wrote to his sister from Brook Street, where he was now settled, respecting the articles he had sent home. He had asked her about her choice of a fan, and expressed his surprise that she had chosen purple and gold, as it was the most disagreeable colour he had seen, " dead, lifeless, and inelegant," and suggested purple and pink or lemon and pink, as " more genteel and lively." " Your answer," he remarked, " in this affair will oblige me. Be assured that I shall ever make your wants my wants, and stretch to the utmost to serve you. As for the songs, I have waited this week for them, and have not had time to copy one perfectly : when the season's over you will have 'em all in print."

The sedateness or primness of his letters home must not be deemed due to want of affection : he really loved those at home beyond all words, but considered it due to his assumed grandeur to address them in such fashion. In Brook Street, had his fate been more fortunate, he should have

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been more comfortable and better placed for work than hitherto. Not only was he near the publications he wrote for, but, for the first time since his childhood, he had a room to himself, to work in and sleep in undisturbed by company.

Finally he appears to have received the long-looked-for glossary, and thus was enabled with its aid to produce another Rowley poem. This "Excelente Balade of Charitie" has been compared with the parable of the Good Samaritan, but it is really a beautiful representation of his own melancholy story. Hiding its personal character under the fictitious endorsement, "Written by the good priest, Thomas Rowley, 1464," he sent it to the "Town and Country Magazine" early in July 1770. It was rejected.

Of this ballad Watts-Dunton truly declares that "for reserved power and artistic completeness no youthful poet has ever approached it." The few words in the Rowley dialect which appear in its lines are no hindrance to the complete comprehension of its meaning, and their sombre sound is in agreement with the sorrowful tenour of the poem:

I

In Virgo, gan the sweltry sun to sheene,¹
And hot upon the meads did cast his ray ;
The apple reddened from its paly green,²
And the soft pear did bend the leafy spray ;
The pied chilandry² sang the livelong day ;

¹ Shine.

² Goldfinch.

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'Twas now the pride, the manhood of the year,
And eke the ground was dight in its most deft aumere.¹

II

The sun was gleaming in the middle day,
Dead still the air and eke the welken blue,
When from the sea arose in drear array
A heap of clouds of sable, sullen hue,
The which full fast unto the woodland drew,
Shrouding at once the sun's all festive face,
And the black tempest swelled and gathered up apace.

III

Beneath an holm, fast by a pathway side,
Which did unto Saint Godwin's convent lead,
A hapless pilgrim moaning did abide,
Poor in his sight, ungentle in his weed,²
Long bretful³ of the miseries of need.
Where from the hailstorm could the beggar fly?
He had no shelter there, nor any convent nigh.

IV

Look in his gloomy face, his spirit scan;
How woe-begone, how withered, bloodless, dead!
Haste to thy church glebe-house,⁴ accursèd man!
Haste to thy kist,⁵ thy only sleeping bed.
Cold as the clay which will grow on thy head,
Is Charity and Love among high elves;
For Knights and Barons live for pleasure and themselves.

V

The gathered storm is ripe; the big drops fall;
The sunburnt meadows smoke and drink the rain;

¹ Apparel.

² Dress.

³ Filled with.

⁴ Grave.

⁵ Coffin.

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The coming ghastness doth the cattle 'pall,
And the full flocks are driving o'er the plain ;
Dashed from the clouds, the waters float again ;
The welkin opes ; the yellow lightning flies ;
And the hot fiery steam in the wide flaming dies.

VI

List ! now the thunder's rattling, clanging sound
Moves slowly on, and then enstrengthened clangs,
Shakes the high spire, and lost, dispended, drowned,
Still on the frightened ear of terror hangs ;
The winds are up ; the lofty elm tree swangs,
Again the levin, and the thunder pours,
And the full clouds are burst at once in stony showers.

VII

Spurring his palfrey o'er the watery plain,
The Abbot of Saint Godwin's convent came ;
His chapournette¹ was drenchèd with the rain,
His painted girdle met with mickle shame ;
He backward told his beadroll at the same ;²
The storm increaseth and he drew aside,
With the poor alms-crauer, near the holm to bide.

VIII

His cloak was all of Lincoln cloth so fine,
With a gold button fastened near his chin ;
His autremete³ was edged with golden twine,
And his peaked shoes a lover's might have been ;
Full well it showed he thoughten the cost no sin ;
The trammels of the palfrey pleased his sight,
For the horse-milliner his head with roses dight.

¹ Hat worn by lawyers and ecclesiastics.

² He told his beads backward, a figurative expression to signify cursing.

³ Cowl.

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IX

“ An alms, Sir Priest ! ” the drooping pilgrim said.
“ O ! let me wait within your convent door,
Till the sun shineth high above our head,
And the loud tempest of the air is o’er ;
Helpless and old am I, alas ! and poor ;
No house, no friend, no money in my pouch,
All that I call my own is this my silver crouch.”¹

X

“ Varlet,” replied the Abbot, “ cease your din,
This is no season alms and prayers to give ;
My porter never lets a vagrant in ;
None touch my ring who not in honour live.”
And now the sun with the black clouds did strive,
And shooting on the ground his shining ray ;
The Abbot spurred his steed and swiftly rode away.

XI

Once more the sky was black, the thunder rolled ;
Fast running o’er the plain a priest was seen ;
Not dressed full proud, nor buttoned up in gold ;
His cope and jape² were grey and yet were clean ;
A Limitour³ he was of order seen ;
And from the pathway side then turnèd he,
Where the poor pilgrim lay beneath the holmen tree.

XII

“ An alms, Sir Priest,” the drooping pilgrim said,
“ For sweet Saint Mary and your order’s sake.”
The Limitour then loosened his pouch thread,
And did thereout a groat of silver take ;
The needy pilgrim did for halline⁴ shake.

¹ Crucifix.

³ Mendicant friar.

² Surplice.

⁴ Joy.

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“ Here, take this silver, it may ease thy care;
We are God’s stewards all, naught of our own
we bear.

XIII

“ But ah ! unhappy pilgrim, learn of me,
Scarce any give a rent roll to their Lord;
Here, take my semecope,¹ thou art bare, I see;
’Tis thine ; the Saints will give me my reward.”
He left the pilgrim, and his way aborde.²
Virgin and holy Saints, who sit in gloure,³
O give the mighty will, or give the good man power.

On July 20 the unfortunate youth wrote one more letter home, the last, as far as is known. It is to his sister, whose decision as to the colour of her gown is of no use at present, as the garment cannot be purchased until he has finished an Oratorio on which he is engaged. They are to be certain of seeing him before the first of next January, and his mother may expect more patterns, he says, adding, “almost all the next ‘Town and Country Magazine’ is mine. I have an universal acquaintance : my company is courted everywhere ; and, could I humble myself to go into a compter, [I] could have had twenty places before now : but I must be among the great ; State matters suit me better than commercial. The ladies are not out of my acquaintance. I have a deal of business now, and must, therefore, bid you adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon—and more to the purpose. Yours, T. C.”

Alas ! the adieu was real. The company

¹ Short under-coat.

² Went on.

³ Glory.

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which was courted everywhere brought no "grist to the mill." Notwithstanding the immense amount of work which he turned out night and day, he could not procure even the bread and water he needed. The contributions he had supplied to the "Town and Country Magazine" were held over, and not published until their author was no more ; and, doubtless, many other publications dealt with him in the same fashion. Although unable to send home any more grandiloquent letters, he is found answering one of George Catcott's as late as August 12. It was written in a flighty tone, and is mainly filled with frothy gossip, but it contains a few lines of boyish bombast about his pretended amorous doings, doings as imaginary as his other mythical exploits, as those who know his character will agree. The few last sentences of his letter prove why he nerved himself to write again to Catcott. He evidently hoped that his correspondent would say a good word for him with their "mutual friend," surgeon Barrett. Unable to make a living by his writings, and seeing no prospect of getting any occupation on land, he resolved to try his fortune as a surgeon's mate on board a vessel. It was miserable employment, and could easily be obtained in those days, the possession of a surgeon's certificate being all that was needed. He wrote to Barrett to give him what he required, and in his letter to Catcott thus referred to the subject : "I intend going abroad as a *surgeon*. Mr Barrett has it in his power to assist me greatly,

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by his giving me a physical character. I hope he will."

Of course, Chatterton's medical knowledge was very small, but, such as it was, he prided himself upon it, and, as may be seen from his manuscripts in the British Museum, he often scribbled short essays upon surgical and kindred subjects. As he was doubtless aware, many persons obtained such a situation as he was seeking when no better qualified for it than he was. And he believed he could very quickly qualify himself for anything. Whatever may have been Barrett's reasons, he did not comply with the appeal, and so the lad's last hope was gone. The month of August had arrived. His money was evidently exhausted and help was nowhere to be obtained. Nothing could be got from the publishers, not even from those who owed him money, and starvation was at hand. Some slight records are available of his last days which show that, notwithstanding the privations he was enduring, his pride was still as strong as ever. He had made the acquaintance of a Mr Cross, an apothecary, who lived in Brook Street, a few doors from where he lodged, and according to the account this man gave to Thomas Warton, author of "The History of English Poetry," scarcely a morning or evening of those last days passed without Chatterton entering his shop for a chat, and the lad's conversation, said Cross, "a little infidelity excepted, was most captivating." Cross adds that, despite the most pressing and repeated

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importunities, he could not persuade Chatterton to dine or sup with him, yet one evening, doubtless pressed by hunger, the youth was tempted into taking some oysters, which it was seen he devoured most voraciously.

A Mrs Wolfe, who also lived a few doors away, remembered him well, and was told by Mrs Angel, his landlady, after the lad's death, that, as she knew he had not eaten anything for some days, on August 24 she asked him to dine with her. He appeared offended at her request, which seemed to him to hint at his needs, and he assured her he was not hungry. Mrs Angel moved from Brook Street soon afterward, and no further information was to be gained from her.

All hope was over. The poor lad left no information for the public to muse or moralize over. He went into his room, fastened the door, and apparently poisoned himself, although some of his contemporaries asserted that he died of starvation. When applied to some years afterward on the subject the coroner stated he had taken no minutes of the affair, and was unable to recall any of the circumstances, but by the depositions at the inquest it was shown that Chatterton had swallowed arsenic in water on August 24, and died thereof the following day.

In consequence of his non-appearance his room had been broken open; the floor was seen covered with little scraps of paper, as the room at Walmsley's had been, showing how he had destroyed his writings before he died. Of

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course, it was not worth any one's time to examine any of the scraps, and they, in all human probability, were swept up and got rid of, yet amongst them may have been some of his best work.

At the inquest nothing enlightening was disclosed, and no relatives appeared to claim the poor racked body, which was placed in a pauper's coffin and buried in the workhouse ground. Eventually his trunk, with some relics in it, was restored to his mother at Bristol.

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